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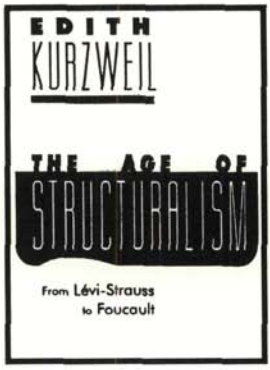

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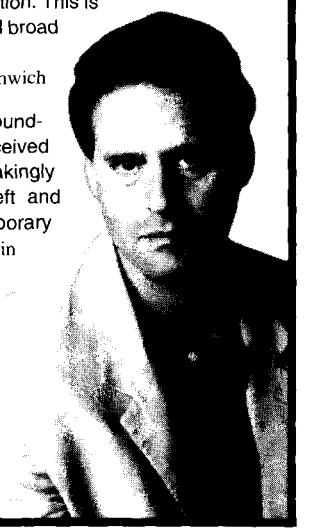

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For further information about the ALSC, to become a member, or to register for the conference, contact John M. Ellis, Secretary/Treasurer, Association of Literary Scholars and Critics, Crown College, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. Phone/Fax: 408-423-4315. E-mail: John_Ellis@macmail.ucsc.edu. Annual dues are $25, students $15. Conference registration fee of $55 covers all meetings and events, as well as breakfast on both days and Monday lunch and dinner. For room reservations (conference rate $95), call the Swissôtel: 800-621-9200. The ALSC has also reserved a limited number at Harvard University at $35 a night. Contact the ALSC for further information.

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Comment

Two more revisionist accounts of the New York intellectuals have just been published – one book-length, *Renewing the Left. Politics, Imagination, and the New York Intellectuals* by Harvey Teres (Oxford University Press) and the other a chapter in a book, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America* by Paul R. Gorman (University of North Carolina Press). Some of the earlier books and articles on the subject were written from a leftist view. But the newest additions are different. The earlier ones had ingenious explanations of why the New York intellectuals abandoned their radical views, which they held in the thirties and early forties. The latest versions use the leftist criterion for evaluating the achievements of the New York intellectuals.

However, it must be said that the criticisms by Teres of our straying from the radical canon are mild. And he praises our stand against the Communists when we were associated with the John Reed Club and in the early days of the independent *Partisan Review*. He is also generally appreciative of the magazine and its major contributors. He is particularly generous in his praise of the early writings of Lionel Trilling, Philip Rahv, and myself. In fact – and this is at the heart of his thesis – Teres regards our early work and the stance of *Partisan Review* as a usable past for current cultural leftism. He approves of our early anti-Stalinism, our championing of modernism, and our insistence that literature has a life of its own and cannot be controlled by or dictated to by political parties or interests. It is our later history that he disapproves of: our so-called elitism, our failure to support radical feminism, black and gay liberation, and radical causes generally.

But even the earlier approval is slightly askew. Teres grasps some of its meaning, but he misses much of it, especially the tone and the implication of the magazine and of the things Rahv and I wrote. For example, he fails to understand that our support of modernism came from the conviction that it was the most advanced movement in modern art and literature, indeed, the only legitimate one. It was the natural accompaniment to radical politics, but the championing of modernism was also an emphatic way of rejecting the idea of proletarian art and the social reading of American literature by critics like Parrington and Hicks.

Teres also doesn't really know how the Communist Party operated. That *Partisan Review* was permitted to criticize the sectarian line in literature, he takes as a sign that the Party was tolerant of disagreement. The fact is, as he knows, Mike Gold and Granville Hicks were outraged by our views. But several Party members, who were on the staff of *The Daily Worker,* were in the John Reed Club and supported us. Moreover, we were just beginning, and the Party did not have time to crack down on

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us. In addition, we were not yet important enough for the Party to take action against us.

Another failure to understand the politics of the Party is Teres's reference to the Popular Front as a cultural movement. It simply was a strategic maneuver by the Party to attract more supporters, including those who were frightened by a revolutionary line – especially since the Soviet Union was not promoting a revolution. Indeed, the Party did not care what writers wrote, so long as they were friendly to or did not criticize the Soviet Union.

In keeping with his search for a radical usable past, Teres faults *Partisan Review,* and particularly Rahv and myself, for not supporting trendy causes. In making this charge, Teres does not seem to understand our true aims and achievements. We were concerned with literary, cultural questions as writers and editors – as were the long list of distinguished contributors to the magazine. We were not political activists, nor did we take part in political issues and causes. The same bias is evident in his treatment of some of the women who wrote for the magazine. He is quite sympathetic and generous in his portraits of Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Susan Sontag, but he has the same complaint against them: they did not support the feminist movement. The fact is, they were not anti-feminist, but their concerns were literary and cultural.

Similarly, in his last chapter, which is in part a tribute to Lionel Trilling, Teres criticizes Trilling for not participating in the radical causes of his time. Again, Teres ignores the fact that this was not Trilling's mission nor his aim. And in doing so, Teres does not do justice to Trilling's large literary and cultural contributions. Teres suggests that our early history be used as a model for current leftist thinking. It is in this sense that he praises our early skirmish with the Communist Party, for then we opposed all political dictates to writers, from a radical perspective. He seems to suggest that some such position is desirable today.

The other revisionist work is "The Cosmopolitan Intellectual Critique: *Partisan Review,*" a chapter in Paul Gorman's book. Here we learn that our big mistake was to be opposed to mass culture. Gorman seems to take it for granted that it was incumbent on us to be for popular culture and that by shirking our prescribed task, we were guilty of that terrible cultural sin: elitism. He mocks Clement Greenberg's famous essay, "Avant-garde and Kitsch," and dismisses Dwight Macdonald's "Mass Cult and Mid Cult," which was one of his best pieces.

This was not a good year for serious writers. In quick succession, Harold Brodkey, Joseph Brodsky, Eleanor Clark, and, more recently, Meyer Schapiro died. Brodkey and Brodsky were too young, Eleanor Clark in

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her eighties. Brodkey was an odd talent. Brodsky was a commanding figure, an original and profound writer in Russian and English. Eleanor Clark was an old friend, going back many years.

It was in the late thirties, when *Partisan Review* had just recently come out as an independent journal, that Eleanor Clark and Mary McCarthy emerged from Vassar and plunged into the heated atmosphere of New York literary and intellectual life. Mary had a polemical personality and fitted right into the bruising style that mixed friendship with antagonism. Eleanor actually did not like New York, and she kept her distance. She acted the part of a country girl. She was a woman of sensibility rather than of disputatiousness. Eleanor was athletic, outdoorish, a good swimmer. She beat me at tennis.

But Eleanor did embrace the radical anti-Stalinism of the magazine, and she became actively engaged in the politics of the New York intellectuals. I remember one incident. I ran into Eleanor on Eighth Street – where everyone met – when the news of the Moscow Trials had just come out. We were of course bewildered but skeptical. I said to Eleanor, "This can't be true." She thought for a moment and said very positively, "It's impossible, it's all lies."

Her earliest published story in *Partisan Review* was in 1938. And she contributed frequently with stories, reviews, and translations. Her fiction was sensitive but full-bodied; her reviews penetrating and sympathetic; her translations – of such diverse figures as Rosa Luxemberg and André Malraux – were superb. I saw her less often after she married Robert Penn Warren and escaped from New York – settling in Connecticut.

Meyer Schapiro's relation with us also began in the thirties. Some of his important pieces were written for *Partisan Review*. His learning was prodigious, his memory phenomenal. He was renowned for his lectures, which had a mesmerizing effect on his audiences, often made up of New York writers and artists.

I recall a telling incident that illustrates his wit, his knowledge, and his view of the mind. It was in the forties that I was having lunch with Schapiro and R. P. Blackmur at a deli on Eighth Street. At one point Schapiro asked Blackmur what he was working on, and Blackmur said it was a study of Henry Adams, for which he had received a Guggenheim. Schapiro then proceeded to give Blackmur a lecture on Adams, citing page numbers and long passages. Blackmur became irritated and in a slightly anti-Semitic outburst, he said, "You intellectuals in New York use your minds too much." Schapiro responded instantly: "When you use your mind, you do not use it up."

W. P.

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EDITH KURZWEIL

The Holocaust: Memory and Theory

In a curious way, the complex history of the Holocaust, including its roots and horrors, is receiving more attention now than ever before, when the world still was shocked, when its traces were fresh, and when more of the surviving victims and perpetrators still were alive. Then, the victims wanted to forget their trauma in order to forge a new life, and the perpetrators did everything they could to escape punishment. As to the many Germans who looked the other way, Victor Klemperer, who by then was living in a "Jewish house" in Dresden, noted on August 10, 1942, that "they ignored what might embarrass them. In that lies. . . [their] complicity, and in that. . . [they are] the typical representative[s] for an overwhelming stratum. This stratum shares the guilt and must pay the penalty. Otherwise, to express it loftily, Germany's soul is lost for the duration and for eternity. [my translation]"

Alexander Mitscherlich publicly echoed these sentiments soon after 1945, but most of his German contemporaries were critical of such honesty. Klemperer, a Jewish philologist and former professor of Romance languages, anticipated him. By then, he did not expect that either he or his diary would survive the Nazis, and yet he kept on coping with each new anti-Semitic law and each atrocity by denying that it essentially would catch up with him as well.

Books discussed in this essay:

HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS: ORDINARY GERMANS AND THE HOLOCAUST. By Daniel J. Goldhagen. Alfred A. Knopf. $30.00.

THE FINAL SOLUTION IN POLAND. By Christopher Browning. Harper Perennial. $12.50.

A SURVIVOR'S MEMOIR: RUTH'S JOURNEY. By Ruth Glasberg Gold. University of Florida Press. $34.95.

CONSCIENCE AND COURAGE: RESCUERS OF JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST. By Eva Fogelman. Anchor Books. $23.95.

MYTH AND MADNESS. By Mortimer Ostow. Transaction Publishers. $32.95.

THE LONGEST SHADOW: IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE HOLOCAUST. By Geoffrey H. Hartman. Indiana University Press. $29.95.

THE DIARY OF A YOUNG GIRL. ANNE FRANK. By Anne Frank. New Translation. Ed. by Otto Frank & Miriam Pressler. Doubleday. $22.95.

ICH WILL ZEUGNIS ABLEGEN BIS ZUM LETZTEN. By Victor Klemperer. Aufbau Verlag, 2 vols. DM 98.–

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The collapse of the Soviet Union and of its client states has opened up previously closed archives, among them Klemperer's diary. We now have proof of many more camps than we had been aware of, of death marches and killing sprees which ordinary people could not help but witness in one way or another. Thus, survivors' memories are being substantiated; it is no longer possible to claim, for instance, that anti-Bolshevism rather than antiSemitism was the driving force of the Holocaust; and that millions of Jews (and some Poles, Gypsies and homosexuals) were exterminated by very few Germans. Moreover, explanations blaming aspects of "German character," and of psychological traits, have worn thin as well. Altogether, the celebrations of various milestones associated with the demise of the Nazis and the end of World War II, which more or less coincide with the opening up of newly available records, have propelled historians and academics to reexamine and reevaluate this past - and the role of the Holocaust.

Each of these above books is representative of a specific genre - explaining and speculating how and why friendly neighbors turned into the enemies of Jews, how and why decent people suddenly were pumped full of hatred, and what allowed for a garden variety of anti-Semitism to run amok and end up in the near-extermination of the Jews between 1933 and 1945. Holocaust books range from history to theory, from scholarly research to literary treatment, from serious fiction to critiques in stirring films, and from reminiscences by survivors of the death camps to descriptive treatments of specific types of camps. A range of theories address why, when, and how "the Germans," or specific Germans, were reacting to Nazi imperatives; why, when, and how each of the successive racist laws was passed, and instituted; whether the SA, the SS or the Einsatztruppen were most culpable; and whether or not a hyped-up, virulent anti-Semitism was intensified when linked to the Jews' alleged Communism. But none of these treatments have explained why anti-Semitism has been so persistent.

Earlier treatments of the Holocaust were less empirically grounded, and usually referred to one or another of the theses of the refugee scholars. For instance, Hannah Arendt's term "the banality of evil" still is being cited, although it is not always made clear that she did not mean that evil is banal, but that Eichmann was a banal man. Had she had more intimate knowledge of the killing fields and the death marches, and of the ghettos which Jews, starved and frozen, were herded into, I don't think she would have maintained that Jews could have defended themselves more effectively, or have been less passive. Erich Fromm's notions about the German personality as afraid of freedom, and the massive study of the "authoritarian personality" by T. W. Adorno and his associates, as well as

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the psychoanalytic inquiries into the motivations of Hitler's henchmen, and into the victims, no longer have the resonance they once had. Since all these theories, to some extent, were based on social psychological suppositions, mostly psychoanalytic, and on some sort of fusion with Marxism, it was assumed that a combination of better insights into individual character - together with more equitable societal arrangements - would provide the tools, also, to prevent future genocidal crimes.

Such laudable humanitarian approaches currently are pursued by a number of professors of English, to some extent influenced by literary fashions, and informed by sociological findings. Ultimately, they are appealing to the humanity we all share. A few political historians are assuming that Hitler's ascendance to power, and with him the Holocaust, would have been stopped had Stalin not engaged in manipulation behind the scenes. Some sociologists are exploring and explaining the rationales and methods of murder in terms of quantitative criteria, while others do so via comparative, historical analyses. The memoirs are the most perspicacious and touching - whether written as testimony or to record the horror of these inhuman deeds, whether intended to finally bury the Nazi past or to make sure similar events will never again recur. Yet none of these treatments, ultimately, can answer what for twelve years turned Goethe's Germany into Hitler's. But Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* and Victor Klemperer's diary are causing much turmoil in Germany, because they both are reopening some aspects of this past by pointing out that many Germans participated in the killings, or looked the other way.

Goldhagen attempts to come to grips with the Holocaust by focusing on the role of the perpetrators. He holds that they could not have so brutally murdered Jews if a malignant and vicious, and mythical, anti-Semitism had not been dormant in millions of German minds; that they would not have acted on it, had Hitler and his leadership not organized and poured sufficient resources into the machinery that was to accomplish the Jews' annihilation; that by blaming all of Germany's economic and social problems on the Jews, Hitler had managed to convince his listeners - to begin with unemployed workers and an impoverished petit bourgeoisie - that the Jews' elimination would cure the ills of the country. All these arguments had been made before. Esssentially, Goldhagen summarizes the scholarship on German anti-Semitism, (endemic in Central Europe for nearly two centuries) and argues that this deep-rooted prejudice eventually enabled Hitler to enlist at least 100,000 ordinary Germans, and most likely half a million, to participate in the butchering of Jews - in cold blood and in the presence of local populations, and sometimes even

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of their own wives and children. Goldhagen has upset many "Holocaust experts," either because he is overturning their own theses, or because much of what he writes is not new. (The meeting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C. on April 10, 1996, I am sure, was not the last.)

Goldhagen relies heavily on testimony by perpetrators, admittedly hard to come by. Among them is Christopher Browning's documentation in *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. Like Browning, Goldhagen examined the profiles and records of these "middle-aged family men of working- and lower-middle-class backgrounds . . . [who] had been drafted into the Order Police (Ordnungspolizei) and . . . . [had gone on] to perform a frightfully unpleasant task." Goldhagen emphasizes the fact that these men could have refused to become cold-blooded murderers but, instead, considered killing as "work." He recounts, for instance, that "Papa Trapp," the commander of Police Battalion 101, was overcome with horror when, on June 20, 1942, he received instructions to have his men slaughter the Jews of Bilgoraj, a small community south of Lublin, including women and children - while they were asleep. Trapp even offered to excuse those who felt squeamish, and about ten percent of the men said they did. But soon they all more or less fell in step. One witness, in testimony gathered between 1962 and 1972, recalled an assignment to round up the Jews from the ghetto of Jozefow:

> I knew that this order was carried out, because as I walked through the Jewish district during the evacuation, I saw dead old people and infants. I also know that during the evacuation all patients of a Jewish hospital were shot by the troops combing the district.

These men, for the most part, had been drafted into the Ordnungspolizei because they didn't meet the criteria of the army or of the SS. Goldhagen contrasts their obedience to kill Jews with their unwillingness to sign a declaration that they would not steal or plunder from Poles. They refused on moral grounds, even though by then they already had been responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Jews. According to Goldhagen, this indicates that these men might have at least attempted to protest murdering Jews, and thus might not have turned into such willing genocidal killers. By then, however, they already had been persuaded that the Jews were at the roots of what ailed German society; that by eliminating the "Jewish problem," they were performing a patriotic duty. Why else would they have been so proud of their heinous deeds, have taken

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photographs of themselves - shooting and looting? Inscriptions such as "condemned Jews, Lomarczy," or "Jews constructing mass grave," both dated 18 August 1942, commemorate these actions. And pictures of uniformed men hunting Jews in the open countryside, guarding near-skeletons, bodies of emaciated victims, of Jews ordered to leap-frog or to pose before being shot, abound.

Browning agrees with Goldhagen's overall take. But he maintains that by emphasizing the perpetrators' sadistic deeds, Goldhagen is minimizing the scruples of those who were anguished at having received orders to kill, and that some who willingly did away with adults hesitated when asked to shoot infants and children. And he points out that years later some of the men of Battalion 101 still were having nightmares about the murders they had committed, and that many bystanders obviously were appalled at what they knew of but felt they could not prevent.

Still, scores of "ordinary men," after overcoming their initial unease, did end up as professional killers. They often went beyond the orders they received from their superiors, and some of them appeared to enjoy the beatings and emotional suffering they inflicted upon their starved, sick, and otherwise helpless victims. Goldhagen reiterates that after years of listening to Hitler's and Goebbels's propaganda, a large number of Germans had come to believe that Jews were controlling the finances of the world, had been responsible for every problem that had plagued the Weimar republic, and were responsible for the war the Western democracies "had started" against the Fatherland. (Elsewhere, Goldhagen chronicles the roots of this anti-Semitism in parts of Catholicism.) By building on these myths, Jews were perceived as "vermin" that had to be eradicated. Consequently, it was but a small step to move from elimination to extermination. That might well explain why even after the Germans knew they had lost the war, some of them so relentlessly kept up the destruction in extermination camps, conducted death marches, and took satisfaction in torturing their victims before executing them. Even at that point, Goldhagen documents, they killed Poles and criminals, homosexuals, and handicapped people more expeditiously and, thus, less cruelly.

Goldhagen's conclusions contradict those of the scholars who argue that the perpetrators were coerced, blindly following directives, pressured to conform, deadened by bureaucratic orders, blind to the larger implications of their deeds, or else clued in to specific, historical explanations of anti-Semitism. Goldhagen states that he examined the Nazi era by means of what the anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls thick description; that this multidimensional approach allowed him to show that the Nazi regime originally tapped into existing anti-Semitism and then whipped it to a fe-

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ver pitch. Indeed, by postulating that the Nazis systematically were dehumanizing their victims, he sharply separates their followers from today's Germans. But Goldhagen fails to address the fact that the elimination of the Jews (and the resettlement of Poles) was part of Hitler's larger aims - providing Germans the *Lebensraum* he had promised them; and that anti-Semitism also was rampant in most of Europe. Organized hatred, he argues, managed to turn feeling men (and some women) into monsters who killed at work and yet went on functioning as exemplary members within their families.

Ruth Glasberg Gold's memoir confirms Goldhagen's hypotheses. After the Soviets occupied her native province of Bukovina in 1940, and the Germans invaded in June 1941 - on her eleventh birthday - the "Romanian vanguards enter[ed] our city, attack[ed], plunder[ed], and murder[ed] thousands of Jews . . . [and] the Einsatztruppen executed every Jew they encountered." Her many relatives in Czernowitz, and in the rest of the country, died - either slaughtered by soldiers or by fellow villagers with whom they once had lived in harmony. Until November 1941, the Romanian *baksheesh* offered a precarious means of survival for some. Then, unexpectedly, all the Jews were herded into tightly packed cattle cars. Four days later, when they were ordered to descend and squeeze into the camp of Marculeshti, some of the elderly and the babies already had died; they stumbled over ditches full of bodies; and they found out that from there "Jews were being sent to various 'points of transfer' to Transnistria." Pain and degradation, hunger and thirst, cold and fear were as unbearable as were the Germans' arbitrary shootings, occasional drownings, and beatings, and the forced marches. Corpses "were everywhere: in barns, in the cellars, and inside the houses. Inevitably the dead became part of our environment." Ruth was forced to trek to one after another of the infamous Transnistrian camps - between 1941 and 1944. There were over one hundred, most of them set up in former Jewish ghettos. Her family eventually ended up in a tiny three-room house, twenty people to a room: they considered themselves lucky, because their room - without doors or windows and a leaky roof - had a tiny makeshift stove that allowed them to melt snow into drinking water. "There was no escape from death. . . . It was everywhere, permeating every pore. We inhaled, smelled, and watched it all the time." Her father died first; then her brother; then her mother. Ruth recalls the horrendous details as she observed them - how she could not relinquish her mother's dead body, the piled-up corpses waiting for the arrival of the gravediggers, and how lapsing into daydreams and hallucinations about her earlier childhood kept her alive. She describes being cared for by one "foster family"

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after another, and then in an orphanage - yet another three-room house set up for children picked up from the alleys, the ruined houses, the barns, and among the corpses. Almost inexplicably, she survived despite bouts of typhoid and malaria, incredible hunger and filth, biting bedbugs and other vermin. And she miraculously eluded the "infamous German commander, Major von Breitag, who on his customary strolls [through the town of Bershad] enjoyed shooting dogs and Jews" - by hiding under her bed inside the orphanage.

Ruth's Journey inadvertently documents that anti-Semitism was as endemic to Romanians as to Germans, and to Poles and Russians, though among them she encountered a few humane persons as well. But only half of her memoir deals with her escape. The second part focuses on life after her rescue, on her harrowing flight from Romania on a freighter that was shipwrecked en route to Palestine, on her resilience in a British detention camp on the island of Cyprus, and eventually on helping build a Kibbutz in the hills above Jerusalem. Now, she recounts how personal ambitions, and difficulties in forming intimate relations, began to loom larger: she ended up becoming a nurse, married a Romanian Jew with whom she moved to Colombia, and after whose death, in 1988, she first confronted the sadness at having lost her parents, her brother, and the rest of her enormous family. She talks of the memories and feelings that had been bottled up all these years, and of searching for the remaining relatives, in Israel and Vienna. Ruth ends up telling us that she induced herself to recall this past in order to make sure that these monstrous crimes will never be forgotten - thereby obeying the biblical command, *Zakhor,* to remember.

Eva Fogelman wrote *Conscience and Courage* in order to pay tribute to those who risked their lives to save her father, Simcha Fagelman, and thousands of other Jews. Her father had been a soldier, and after the Russian invasion of his Byelorussion town near Vilna, had become a baker. When the Germans arrived, they began rounding up Jews. His daughter briefly tells of the dangerous circumstances he survived, and that he barely got away - thanks to a Russian baker and a score of farmers who hid him, and gave him some food. He met her mother after the war, in the displaced person's camp where their daughter was born. The family first moved to Israel and then to the United States.

In the 1970s, after Fogelman became aware that children of survivors suffered from an unrecognized and psychologically damaging sense of isolation, she formed a support group for them. All of their parents, in one way or another, had been saved by "ordinary individuals" who en-

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dangered their own lives to save Jews. With the help of volunteers, she set out to find these "rescuers," and they eventually interviewed over three hundred of them. Around that time, she enrolled in a doctoral program in social psychology. She worked with Stanley Milgram, who in his famous empirical investigations had established that most people surrender personal responsibility for their actions when asked to do so by a person in authority. But Fogelman, instead of focusing on those who obeyed orders, set out to discover what traits induced others to go against the grain. She had trouble locating surviving rescuers, since they constituted a tiny fraction of the seven hundred million people in Nazi-occupied territories: some of them may have lent a hand just once; others took great risks over a few years; but they all functioned under enormous emotional and social pressures. She tells us that among them were liars, forgerers and thieves, aristocrats, clergy, businessmen and nannies; that they acted instinctively or out of conviction, and made use of whatever means were at hand.

Fogelman's personal histories are most moving. She is extremely perceptive when examining, for instance, the changing relations between hidden children and their rescuers, the need to keep secret the clandestine connections, the identities and cover stories. But she is on slipperier ground when generalizing from analyses of traits, and of anecdotes by rescuers and their benefactors, to larger historical truths. Like many social psychologists, she assumes that the good in people, and our humane ideals, in the end will win out. Thereby, I believe, she may well overlook the proverbial (and coexisting) handwriting on the wall.

Indeed, Fogelman's rescuers were good people who endangered their own lives. But the Vienna I grew up in, and the Nazi Germany Victor Klemperer describes in such vivid detail, exemplify that most Jews then had lived in a fool's paradise and woke up to recognize the potential virulence of the pervasive anti-Semitism only after the Nazis' triumph. I am for removing our rose-colored glasses rather than chance the need to be rescued - without, however, succumbing to paranoia. I can only assume that Fogelman's father, were he still alive, would agree, and would recall Santayana's dictum that those who refuse to learn from history are bound to repeat it.

The psychoanalyst Mortimer Ostow, in *Myth and Madness*, reports on a nine-year study by a group of colleagues who, together, expected to discover the roots of the Holocaust - by ferreting out the unconscious traits shared by all anti-Semites. They explored psychodynamic phenomena rather than victims or rescuers' experiences and situations. They used a sophisticated psychoanalytic approach to systematically analyze the

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(mostly unconscious) prejudices of former Nazis. Ostow begins by summarizing previous psychoanalytic takes on the subject, most of these mentioning the etiological factors Freud had noted already before the Holocaust. These include that Jews disavow the murder of the father, God, while Christians admit it; Jews are aliens within their environment; are convenient scapegoats for communal hostility; usually manage to be successful in spite of oppression. Still, Ostow's group had trouble even to define anti-Semitism. After all, a philo-Semite may evolve into an anti-Semite, an individual may have no interest in Jews yet turn against them in the presence of anti-Semitic friends; an Israeli military action may reverse a previously positive attitude; and anti-Semitic hostility could be imbued by a range of intensity. In addition, anti-Semitism is embedded in the mythology of Christianity; fictions such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* keep being revived; criticism of Jewish behavior is being justified when instances of these myths seem to recur; and Jewish self-hatred - which externalizes the qualities Jews themselves find hateful - adds to it, as Ostow observed in his own patients.

As we know, psychoanalytic theory delves into the earliest experiences of the individual, and assumes that attitudes to groups are derived, primarily, from interactions learned on the mother's lap, and at her breast. Among other things, they found that anti-Semitic characters had trouble controlling their anger in general; that they tended to displace inner conflicts onto the outside world; that Jews sometimes became the recipients of negative qualities of a parent; and that anti-Semitic comments would surface most strongly during the negative transference. About half of this book is about the anti-Semitic myths we know - stretching forward from biblical times to the present - and the fantasies, along with their psychological roots and the rationalizations associated with them.

Ostow separates the pogrom mentality from the anti-Semitism of prejudice and discrimination, which he ascribes to individuals. He suggests, I believe correctly, that an ideal group identity, such as the one created in Leni Riefenstahl's film, *Triumph of the Will,* is conducive in furthering an image of unity, of a movement's history rooted in the glory of the nation. Hitler was embodied as a hero, a savior, and the progenitor of a new Germany. Under his aegis, Germans became submissive and loyal to the group, thereby involving themselves in a fantasy of shared community - which in the film was enacted to the tune of Wagnerian music and radiant light. The "party line" was revealed, and it aroused patriotism, so that Germans accepted the dictum that "a nation that does not value its racial purity will perish."

Altogether, concludes Ostow, apocalyptic movements start by homogenizing their members psychologically, then attract sympathizers, and

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after that, are joined by people without strong political convictions. A pogrom cannot come about, he goes on, unless there is no source of power able or willing to prevent it. By drawing a parallel to the killing of the Lubavitch Hasidim who accidentally had run over an African-American child in Brooklyn, he moves to the current American (and European) debates about "other Holocausts" - be they in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia and wherever racial and national hatreds are escalated to killings. Ostow gets out of the simplification such universalization always leads to, by differentiating between small and full-fledged progroms. The Brooklyn pogrom was a small one, due to exposure to anti-Semitic mythology and propaganda by "community organizers," black newspapers, and pseudointellectuals, he states, and did not escalate because effective leadership was lacking and government officials were determined to prevent violence. Ostow diagnoses individual anti-Semites as expressing hatred when regressing to primary process thinking - when unable to subject feelings to disciplined reasoning, to logic, or reality testing. However, this diagnosis, I believe, cannot really eliminate anti-Semitism or fully explain its social-historical context.

Geoffrey Hartman's memoir, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, does not directly focus on anti-Semitism, on perpetrators, rescuers or victims. He was luckier than Ruth Glasberg Gold and Simcha Fagelman, because he was sent to England on a children's transport, at the age of nine. Whereas Ostow and Fogelman might want to locate the roots of his malaise, of what it must continue to mean that he lost his childhood, that he grew up without the relatives who died in the Holocaust, Hartman reflects on these realities in the erudite and differentiated manner of his profession. As a lucky survivor, he managed to follow his bent and became a professor of English literature at Yale University.

Inevitably, Hartman contemplates his past with references to literary masterpieces and scholarly lore, questioning whether "the universe of dying that was Auschwitz" can be characterized either in terms of "martyrs," "victims," "resisters," or in any other everyday language or, as Lawrence Langer so convincingly maintained, it "yearns for a language purified of the taint of normality." Hartman speculates whether every generation has to be reeducated anew, and if so, whether historical participation even is possible for those who have no direct connection to any of the survivors. He finds that the fiction and documentary genres that have been produced, particularly by the second generation - the children of survivors - help counteract the despair. I'm not so sure, if only because stories or films such as "Schindler's List," are embellished for public consumption - and fictionalized. This is not to say that the subject should be

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avoided, that knowing something may not be better than knowing nothing.

In his essay on former President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery, to pay tribute (together with Chancellor Kohl) to German soldiers who died in World War II, for instance, Hartman addresses the importance of symbols. By commemorating Germany's "liberation" from Nazi rule, Reagan intended to show American solidarity with the new Germany, but by callously forgetting distinctions between fallen German soldiers and murdered Jews, Hartman demonstrates that Reagan inadvertently shifted the blame onto Hitler and his intimate circle alone - thereby implicitly exonerating the many perpetrators. Hartman brilliantly shows that in spite of the attention the Holocaust has received - in schools and the media - this discussion does not appear to have arrested the prevalent, and pervasive, desensitizing trend; that true empathy is becoming ever more of a rarity now that individual suffering has become the meat of television news. Human indifference, I would add, seems to grow as we are exposed to our daily ration of violence and, as Hartman notes, as the media adds its own spin to it.

Like Ostow, Hartman delves into the ubiquitous roots of anti-Semitism. But unlike him, he focuses on its expression in art, literature and film, on for instance, the representation and conceptualization of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*:

> Lanzmann himself will not probe the Why in his film, only and relentlessly the How - the how of technique, how exactly it was done, how many were processed, how long it took. . . His questions avoid the one question that haunts us: Why?"

Also, he elaborates on the ways in which intellectuals such as Jean-François Lyotard in his post-Holocaust aesthetics, and Emmanuel Levinas in his attempt to retrieve humanism, grapple with the enormity of the Holocaust, and yet have not truly been able to comprehend it. The allusive novels by Primo Levi, Aharon Appelfeld, and Norman Manea, I would argue, come closest.

In order to preserve the authentic voices of the survivors, Hartman has initiated the Yale Testimony Project, which militates against "collectivizing" these experiences. For us who were not there, he wants to restore the human quality that gets lost in theoretical treatments - whether of anti-Semitism, of victims, of perpetrators, of bystanders. Together, these oral histories depict the collective fate of "a single event unparalleled in its murderous scope and with continuing far-reaching

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consequences." Thereby, states Hartman, we may be able to "burn through the cold storage of history." In other words, he is not denying the validity of "Holocaust studies," but expects to overcome their limitations.

Why do we need a definitive edition *of The Diary of a Young Girl: Anne Frank*, I thought, when I opened this book. We know that along with her family and another four people Anne lived in an Amsterdam attic, eventually was deported, and died a few days before the end of the war, in 1945. We recall that she was hidden by a group of friends, primarily by Miep Gies, all of whom risked their lives to help the Frank family. When interviewed, Miep maintained that she had been no hero, that she did only what was asked of her, and what was necessary at the time. Of course, she is counted as exemplary among Fogelman's rescuers of Jews.

I was somewhat put off by finding that this new translation is accompanied by a "Reader's Companion" - that includes "study questions for teachers and classroom use," "questions for group discussion," and other materials for the teaching of the Holocaust. Is this event to be taught through the eyes of a teenager to our teenagers - by indifferent teachers who don't know anything about it?, I wondered. And are pupils going to learn about Fascism per se, about German history, and about the larger questions anti-Semitism poses through Anne's eyes alone? I kept pondering whether I was unnecessarily upset by this reduction *ad absurdum*, but then wondered whether such an exposure may not be better than none at all.

This retranslated and unabridged edition also made me reflect on the enormous writing gift of that young girl, and made me realize - as I never had before - how many genuine talents must have been murdered by the Nazis, and thus were lost to humanity. Anne was able to honestly, and often lyrically, convey her thoughts about her budding sexuality, her crush on Peter - the only other adolescent in the hide-out - the fights with her parents - while understanding their plight - and her search for a normal life in the outside world, which she could glimpse only from a window, after the workers in the shop below had gone home. Of course, this diary was her closest companion. On May 26, 1944, for instance, Anne writes:

> My dearest Kitty,
> At long, long last, I can sit quietly at my table before the crack in the window frame and write you everything, everything I want to say.I feel more miserable

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than I have in months. Even after the break-in I didn't feel so utterly broken, inside and out. On the one hand, there's the news about Mr. van Hoeven, the Jewish question (which is discussed in detail by everyone in the house), the invasion (which is so long in coming), the awful food, the tension, the miserable atmosphere, my disappointment in Peter. On the other hand . . .

And she goes on to write about what Miep has been telling her about her own life outside. On June 6, 1944, she writes at length about D-Day, putting down every bit of information she heard over the clandestine radio. She ends:

Oh, Kitty, the best part about the invasion is that I have the feeling that friends are on the way. Those terrible Germans have oppressed and threatened us for so long that the thought of friends and salvation means everything to us! Now it's not just the Jews, but Holland and all of occupied Europe. Maybe, Margot [her sister] says, I can even go back to school in October or September.

Anne made her last (and very long) entry on August 1, 1944. Three days later, Miep found the diary after the Franks and the van Daans were taken away - having been betrayed by one of the workers in the shop. After the war, she gave it to Otto Frank, Anne's father, the only survivor of the attic's eight inhabitants.

Victor Klemperer was born in 1881 and died in 1960. He managed to survive the Holocaust, thanks to his courageous, non-Jewish wife, Eva. In the first entry of this diary, in January 1933, he already notes the political polarization at the university of Dresden, where he was permitted to continue lecturing (mostly pro forma) until the middle of 1934. He kept his diary, which he calls his heroics, in order to bear witness. It is a brilliant, unique chronicle of everyday life under the Nazis. Historians agree that such an authentic document is more reliable than any reconstruction of the period, because it does away with the biases even the best memoirs and historical inquiries inevitably contain. He writes:

I note a catchword. On the following day it seems unimportant, overtaken in fact and feeling. But the changing details of everyday life are after all the most important." [my translation]

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A sharp and insightful observer of the Jews and the ever accelerating ordinances against them, and of the Germans around him and their reactions to local, national and international events, Klemperer's 1694 page oeuvre brings his considerable erudition, his extensive knowledge of history, literature and culture to this task. Already in April 1933, he notes that Hitler's movement depends on the Jewish cause, but he "fails [as yet] to understand why this is so central." In his introduction to *Lingua Tertii Imperii* (*The Language of the Third Reich*), the book based on entries in this diary that was published in 1975, he notes:

> In the hours of disgust and hopelessness, in the endless boredom of mechanical factory work, at sickbeds and deathbeds, at grave sites and in my distress, and in moments of utter humiliation, while my heart was failing - the demand of this dairy always helped me over the hump: observe, study, impress on your memory what is happening, tomorrow it seems different, tomorrow you already experience it differently: hold on to how it appears now, and how it influences. [my translation]

Klemperer knows that keeping this diary, and writing his "Curriculum" (autobiography), are keeping him sane. Again and again, he cannot believe that he will survive: when he is deprived of his means of support; is denied access to the libraries he needs for the research he desperately clings to; when the car he acquired with endless difficulty is being confiscated; when his living quarters repeatedly are being searched; when he has to move to the "Jewish house" from the one he and Eva had labored so steadfastly first to acquire and then to maintain; and when he is forced to move to yet more crammed quarters. He writes of having to put his cat to sleep after Jews no longer were allowed to keep pets; of the humiliations at having to forego visits to a barber; of having to wear a large yellow star; and of having to buy food with his Jewish rationcard. Throughout, he was worried about Eva's health; her exhaustion at having to run around bargaining for potatoes and other necessities; and endangering her life while carrying his diary across town to hide it. Still, Klemperer realizes that he is so much better off than other Jews, thanks to Eva.

Klemperer was slow only in recognizing the Nazis' tenacity. He decided to stay on because Eva did not want to leave. He reports on the many opinions, among family members and friends, that lead him to assume - with "unflinching certainty" - that the Nazis could not maintain themselves in power. When he hears that his brother, Georg, moved to Boston to join his son, he is grateful for his ongoing financial support, but

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angry that Georg who, "apparently considers [me] without honor by staying in Germany," left without saying good-bye. Another time, he notes that he is "being punished for his former nationalism." But he kept clinging to the belief that German liberalism would win out, identified with his country, and was among those Jews who assumed that as veterans of the First World War they would be safe. Also, he had been ambivalent about his Jewishness, was assimilated, and did not practice any religion. By the time he came around and wanted to emigrate, in September 1938, he still says that despite the Nazi disaster he would continue to love the German language:

> No one can deprive me of my German culture, but my nationalism and patriotism are gone forever. Now, my thinking is entirely Voltairian and cosmopolitan. . . . Voltaire and Montesquieu more than ever are my people. [my translation]

When he tries to receive an affidavit from America, he regrets not having children who could facilitate his and Eva's departure - by guaranteeing to support them. In December 1938, his nephew in Chicago did send him an affidavit, but by then it was too late.

Over and over again, Klemperer marvels at the English (less so at the French) for not stopping Hitler's early conquests - the Saar, Austria, the Sudentenland, Czechoslovakia. He has heard rumors of a crematorium as early as May 1941; on January 1, 1942 he refers to concentration camps, and a month later is worried that his writing will land him in one of them. He constantly fears being rounded up and stops going out. But he is equally apprehensive while "waiting" for the ever more frequent house searches - that so often entail beatings and arrests.

By 1942, Klemperer hears rumors that the Jews of Vienna and Prague are being deported to Theresienstadt, and that suicides among them abound. News that friends "have been shot while fleeing," or "have passed away," become ever more frequent. He notes that "the tyranny intensifies every day," that "Nazism is a cancer in the German body," and that "poets and philologists know the language, but can't keep language from telling the truth." He keeps close track about the state of the war, notes the lies and propaganda in the press, and guesses at the truth by watching out for new Nazi language. Soon, he considers a German victory impossible and hopes only that the war will end quickly. And he mentions rumors of "a new type of evacuation of Jews into camps."

In 1943, Klemperer gets more and more specific about the ever tightening living conditions, the misery, the hunger, the forced labor, the posters of Stürmer-type Jews who "caused the war," and the endless

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struggle for simple survival. Until June 6, 1944, notes Klemperer, the media announced that the enemy never would be able to land, would have to take its time, and couldn't afford such a sacrifice. On that day, Goebbels immediately shifted gears, stating that the Allies had had no choice but to invade, and had to do so across the Atlantic. From then on, Klemperer cites (false) Nazis reports about the fighting: about enemies who are bleeding to death in Normandy, where "Jews, forever greedy, already are trying to seize property. After all, it is their war, the war of the Jews." He concludes that this may well be a response to the fact that wherever the Allies landed, they immediately annulled the anti- Jewish decrees - which are central to Nazi ideology, and "prove" that the Jews caused the war. From then on, reports about air raids, the invasion, the "liquidations," and reflections about these take up much space. Klemperer notes his own ever increasing states of anxiety when Eva is on yet another errand; his fear of impending deportation. The year 1944 "ends in great disappointment. . . I thought the war would be over by now." Soon, he reports of the misery of refugees, of mass graves, of mass shootings, of hearsay that the Russians plan taking Dresden. Then, ten pages of particulars about the destruction of the city. Soon thereafter, Eva resolutely removed his yellow star, and with false papers the Klemperers fled into the countryside, where they stayed in hiding until the liberation.

On the afternoon of May 3, 1945, and shortly after the press still had assured them that events were about to turn around, they knew that Hitler was dead. By May 15th, Klemperer was hoping to live long enough to again become a professor, to complete some of his writing projects, to once again enjoy cigarettes, alcohol, and driving a car. In June, they were on their way to the house they had built in Dölzschen.

Klemperer's fascinating diary, which had been deposited in the Dresden Landesarchiv (in the Soviet zone), was recovered in 1988 and edited by one of his students, Walter Nowojski. Its literary value equals its political one. In Germany, this diary has become a bestseller and has revived the debate about what ordinary Germans then knew of the systematic killing of the Jews. (It will be published here in translation by Random House.) Klemperer's testimony lays to rest their alleged lack of awareness, although we can hardly assume that many Germans shared the insights of Klemperer and his handful of friends, or of Alexander Mitscherlich. Whether or not the majority of Germans was complicit - as some of my younger German friends have maintained for some time - remains a moot point.

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Certainly, people must behave differently in a totalitarian system than in an open one, and how many among them dare defy its authorities, and to what extent and under what circumstances, are yet other questions. Fogelman's and Ostow's studies have shown that individuals' motivations are infinite, insofar as these depend not only on so-called traits, strengths, weaknesses, and on other qualities of character, and on habitual response mechanisms, but on momentary circumstances and perceived opportunities to act. Neither their books, *Ruth's Journey*, *The Longest Shadow*, or *Anne Frank's Diary*, have caused the sort of stir as have the indictments in *Ordinary Men*, in *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, and in *Zeugnis*. That some have read Goldhagen's book as implicating the character of today's Germans - even though he does not do so - is at the roots of the current controversies.

Aside from the revelations about the Nazi perpetrators, however, and the documentation of everyday life in that dictatorship, we assume that the better we understand these times, the more able will we be to avoid future genocides. That pacifism and dreams of humanity - whether in a Marxist or any other kind of garb - will save the world, as we have come to realize of late, is an illusion. However, had people paid more attention to the insidious anti-Semitism Goldhagen posits as a necessary condition for Hitler's success, they might well have paid it more heed, and might have avoided sticking their heads into the proverbial sand. And had England and France (and America) not been so steeped in their policy of appeasement, World War II obviously might have been avoided, or at least have cost fewer lives. So, if we are to learn from that history, it seems to me, we will have to analyze each volatile political situation in its own context, and will have to thoroughly take into account ancient, national and religious hatreds, as well as the internal and external political elements that may want to shore them up to serve their own ends, or those of an ideological, ambitious political leader.

These reflections go beyond those of the writers of "Letters to the Editor" rebutting Goldhagen, whether to remind him that there were Germans like Schindler who saved Jews, and others who hid them; whether reiterating psychological and economic arguments rebuking Weimar Germany, reiterating that today's Germany is democratic in the best sense, or defending a specific thesis about the Holocaust. In fact, the liberal debates that have taken hold in German society, it seems to me, are antidotes to the deep-rooted anti-Semitism that occasionally keeps popping up. For advancing such debates, enlarging them whenever possible, and doing so in total honesty, appear to be the best weapons against anti-Semitism - not only in Germany but everywhere else. And if, as some have argued, it is the inevitable underside of Enlightenment thought, of

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modern civilization, then we must learn to live with it. If this is true, and I'm not sure that it is, and we keep in mind that to eradicate anti-Semitism might entail eliminating Jews, and with them the humanity that alone can protect Christians from violating the humanitarian aspects of their religion, then it is conceivable that living with this insight might save our civilization.

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Beyond the Twilight of Reason: Rethinking the Western Tradition

Introduction

Following are some of the proceedings of a conference held at Adelphi University on March 7 and 8, 1996. For a variety of reasons, we could not publish it in its entirety. The sessions on the impact of science and on the future of computers unfortunately are missing. But we thought that the following comments made on a paper by the distinguished biophysicist, E. O. Wilson, would nevertheless be of interest to our readers. The moderator was Karen Burke, a distinguished physician, philosopher, and member of Adelphi University's Board of Trustees.

Part One. Scientific Method and the Two Cultures

Karen Burke: Professor I. Bernard Cohen, the Victor Thomas Professor Emeritus of the History of Science at Harvard University, will comment on the crucial role technology has played in the advances made by the sciences.

I. Bernard Cohen

The Role of Technology in the Advance of Science

Discussions of what is called scientific method and even accounts of how scientists do their work tend to concentrate on common features of the vast enterprise of science. In presenting the qualities of science and its methods of finding and verifying new truths, almost all writers concentrate on gross similarities among all the sciences. This has been the primary feature of every such endeavor from the earliest days of the scientific revolution in the seventeenth century to the present. Such a delineation of science and its methods was, as a matter of fact, a feature of the writings of every major scientist of that noble century that produced

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the Scientific Revolution, that gave birth to science as we know it today, a company that includes Galileo, Kepler, Descartes, Bacon, Harvey, Huygens, Boyle, Hooke, and Newton. The great Linnaeus, the systematizer of nature, declared, "Method [is] the soul of science."

The seventeenth-century founders of our modern science believed that it was method that differentiated their activity from all antecedent studies of nature. Hence, the codification of the method was of primary importance. These founding scientists believed, furthermore, that such a codification would have two enormous benefits. One was that if the stages of the method were set forth, then human beings of ordinary intelligence would be able to make the great discoveries that advance our knowledge of the natural world. They believed that knowledge of nature could be found by anyone, if only one were armed with a codified true method.

Accordingly, a stress on method implied that great discoveries could be made by mortals with average brilliance of mind. The applications of the method would enable ordinary men and women to push forward the boundaries of knowledge. Thus René Descartes, in his celebrated "Discourse on Method," explained that he was not endowed with a mind "in any way more perfect than that of the ordinary man." Indeed, he added, he often wished he had "as quick a wit, or as sharp and distinct an imagination, or as ample and prompt a memory as some others." Two centuries later, Charles Darwin expressed the same idea, remarking in his autobiography that he had "no great quickness of apprehension or wit," that his "power to follow a long and purely abstract train of thought [was] limited," and that his memory was "poor."

The second benefit that the founders of the scientific revolution believed would follow was also democratizing. They boasted that their method was a great equalizing force. In the past, the sources of knowledge and authority were the writings of men who had developed a special insight by dint of years of arduous training and study. The great truths about nature and the world were found only by learned doctors or by people who had achieved grace or special divine enlightenment. The new method proclaimed a very different authority for truth. In the later pithy phrase of Louis Agassiz, he instructs us, "Study nature, not books."

In the past, if a master told his students that a heavy body falls faster than a light one, he could cite an Aristotelian source as his authority and it was not to be questioned. Knowledge exhibited a hierarchical set of values. But with the new democratizing method, anyone who knew the method could call upon nature rather than ancient sages. A mere beginner in science could now challenge the greatest authority by actually

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performing an experiment, by simultaneously dropping two unequal weights in order to find out what happens.

Science suggests a fruitful analogy to nature, applying to the scientific enterprise what is perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of Darwin's thinking about species, what Ernst Mayr has called "population thinking." Basically, Darwin laid tremendous stress on the significance of variation, on the fact that individuals of any given species are generally not exactly alike in all their heritable characteristics. Darwin, accordingly, focused his attention on individual differences within a species rather than on gross similarities among all members of the species.

Applying this principle to science itself, we are directed to study the many distinctive ways in which different scientists have pursued their studies. That is, if we adopt a Darwinian point of view and look for elements of variation, we cannot help but note the degree to which scientists greatly differ among themselves, with regard to the kinds of discoveries that different types of scientific innovators make. On the simplest level, no variation seems as pronounced as that which divides scientists into two major groups. One includes, for instance, Michael Faraday, Louis Pasteur, Charles Darwin, and Niels Bohr – all of whom continued to make varieties of discoveries over many years. Such scientists continually open up new subjects, they exhibit a quality of individual genius in being able to ask fruitful questions. How is it, we are led to ask, that some scientists seem to have some special kind of instinct or insight that enables them again and again to identify fundamental problems and then to move ahead in devising suitable means to effective solutions?

The opposite group would include another type of scientists, such as Wilhelm Konrad Roentgen (discoverer of X-rays), J. J. Thompson (discoverer of the electron), and Alfred Russell Wallace (co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of natural selection). All of them are honored in the annals of science but are remembered for having made but one significant discovery. Quite evidently, as these examples show, there is a human factor in the pursuit of science that seems to transcend the mere application of method or the standardization of procedures. This is a factor of human creativity that defines a Darwinian type of variation. It is, we may take note, a feature that links science to the humanities, to other expressions of the creative human spirit – art, music, philosophy, and literature. Of course, from a purely reductionist point of view, one may hope that some day these features of differential human creativity will be understood in terms of a supposed mechanism of the brain. Here, I must confess I see my role to be that of an historian and not a prophet.

Let me now address a second Darwinian aspect of the discussion of the scientific enterprise. One of Darwin's original ideas was related to the

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use of tools by human beings, comparing such use of tools to the role of natural organs in plants and animals. As is well known, Darwin's discussion of this topic, in fact, earned him a place, if only embalmed in two footnotes, in the second edition of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*. Tools and technology are related to science in two very important ways. One of these needs no special emphasis today: the application of scientific discoveries to practice, serving as an increasingly significant vector in technology. But there is another and very basic kind of interaction that is not so obvious, one that is closely related to any discussion of method and scientific roads to truth.

Before exploring this aspect of the sciences, let me take note that the founders of our modern science were keenly aware that the fruits of their research would be to serve, as Descartes put it, "the general welfare of mankind," to make us the "lords and masters of nature." In particular, he specified, the new method would lead to a "practical" science, improving medicine and all the crafts of artisans. Francis Bacon expressed a similar sentiment, envisaging a time when the new science would have the practical effect of improving every conceivable aspect of human existence. It is not usually noted, however, that Bacon insisted that such "fruits" of science would be more important as proofs or "earnests" of the validity of the new method than as means of increasing the comforts of daily life.

This kind of interaction between science and technology is, as I have mentioned, so obvious that it needs no emphasis. But the other aspect of this relationship – the influence of technology on science – is not only far from obvious; it is neglected by almost all philosophers of science and even by historians and sociologists of science. It is historically demonstrable that from the seventeenth century onwards, the production of scientific knowledge has depended to a very high degree on the state of the practical arts, on useful technology. I believe that, in real terms, the availability of suitable tools by far outweighs the importance of the codification of method. To put the matter another way, to present science as an activity without the technology on which it depends may be like a staging of *Hamlet* without the main character.

Historians of the scientific revolution tend to concentrate on intellectual changes, on putting on a new thinking cap, on such factors as the geometrization of space and the destruction of the traditional Aristotelian cosmos. It is generally agreed that a major step in forging the new science was to transform the Copernican system so as to make it a foundational part of science, rather than being just a hypothetical or arbitrary mathematical speculation. This was accomplished by a demonstration that it is not "philosophically absurd" to consider the Earth to be "merely" another planet, just like the other planets and not different from them.

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This primary step in establishing a "new science" was taken by Galileo in 1609. Using the newly invented telescope, Galileo was able to demonstrate the similarities between the Earth and the Moon and between the Earth and the planets. Almost at once, the new astronomy ceased to be merely a mathematical hypothesis or a computing device but rather a scientific system, one whose truth and falsity had to be considered. This transformation of the Copernican system, as the late Derek Price always stressed, was the effect of a new instrument, the telescope, the product of the technology of lens-making, the craft of making lenses for eyeglasses. Another new technology was printing, supplying the requirements of the scientific revolution for accurate, rapid, and reliable transmission of information.

The great advances in biology in the nineteenth century, leading up to the germ theory of disease, were made possible by technological advances in optical technology, leading to better microscopes. The development of microbiology depended on the new dye technology that made possible the differential staining of micro-organisms. Anyone who has studied the history of early twentieth-century atomic and subatomic physics, or of particle physics in general, knows how this subject was opened up and advanced by the availability of a technology for producing near-vacuum, low-pressure atmospheres. In our times, the precision measurements which are a feature of scientific knowledge are as much a monument to technology as to the creative minds to whom we award the standard prizes. Whoever reads critically the story of the work of Watson and Crick will recognize at once the essential role of the technological tools available to make their discovery possible. There is hardly a branch of science that does not depend for its very existence on ever new technologies. An examination of the historical role of technology reveals the means which mediate between the methods of scientific inquiry and the external realm of nature. In this sense the state of technology is an index of both the strict limitations and the expansive capacities of any scientist at the cutting edge of his subject.

Karen Burke: Thank you. Our next speaker is Professor Mel Schwartz, who is the I. I. Rabi Professor of Physics at Columbia University.

Mel Schwartz: In the days of Newton, science was often called natural philosophy, and most people with a modicum of education could converse with intelligence about the motion of planets as well as about the philosophy of Aristotle. In the three-hundred-odd years since Newton, the literate world has sundered. Were we now to ask a literate person, skilled in law or philosophy, history or politics, to explain the meaning of

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special relativity or quantum mechanics, we would almost certainly receive a blank stare. Conversely, if we were to ask the average scientist to write an essay on Plato's political ideas, we would be met by the same blank stare. To a large extent, most of the literate in this world are mathematically illiterate, and most of our scientists never give much thought to understanding of non-scientific ideas. In fact, this has been of great concern to me, since I returned to the academic world about three years ago.

I discovered that for many years Columbia University has had a core curriculum. I was asked to chair a committee which was to concern itself with the future of Columbia College. This core curriculum had outstanding introductions to philosophy, history, the humanities, and Western civilization. But nowhere was there an overall discussion of science. So I tried to convince my colleagues that this core curriculum ought to include the basics of science, so that a student after completing his undergraduate education wouldn't be completely ignorant of what relativity or quantum mechanics are all about. Oddly enough, it was the scientists on this committee who objected. They saw no reason to waste time away from their research and graduate students, to bother with a group of undergraduates who really didn't know much about anything.

That is what got me interested in this whole area. Let me start with mathematics. Mathematics, of course, ties together much of science, especially the physical sciences. Whenever I mention the word "calculus" to a group of undergraduates, I get a condescending stare. Never mind the fact that calculus is no more than cunning arithmetic. The mere word sends shivers down the spines of most literati. Yet the concepts inherent in calculus are so simple, being no more than addition and subtraction, that a literate person should feel ashamed at not understanding them. Why, we might ask, is this fear of mathematics so pervasive? I have no doubt that the fault lies with the educational system which considers mathematics not an interesting subject but a necessary tool for a career in technology. If you're not going in for a career in engineering or science, why bother? It was not always this way. Some of the greatest scholars and philosophers in history were also conversant with the mathematical knowledge of the time. In fact, in our century, one of our most renowned philosophers, Bertrand Russell, was a world-class mathematician.

Mathematics should be thought of as a great intellectual experience, profoundly beautiful, a form of poetry. I find it amazing, for example, that the University of Rochester, one of our foremost institutions of higher learning, should consider eliminating its graduate mathematics department. Today's typical undergraduate learns nothing about group theory or number theory, about complex analysis, topology or differential

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geometry. It's hard to imagine that an educated person should have no understanding of these terms and as a result no appreciation of some of the ideas that the human mind is capable of pondering.

Much of the split between the two cultures is due to the inability of people to distinguish between pure science and technology. Mention quantum mechanics and relativity, and most people think of atomic bombs. Mention electromagnetic theory, and most people think of television. In fact, the situation got so bad two years ago that the senator who was overseeing the funding for the National Science Foundation insisted that at least sixty percent of its resources be allocated to "relevant" research, namely the sort of research that can have immediate impact on the bottom line. I am reminded of the time when an interviewer asked Faraday to what his discovery of mathematical induction could be put. He replied that he had no idea but the government would almost certainly find a way of taxing it. You can be sure that Newton did not search for immediate relevance when he set out the laws of planetary motion. Nor did Maxwell look for relevance when he set forth the basic equations for electromagnetism. In this century, there have been two great intellectual revolutions which have overturned our basic notion of how the world around us functions. The first of these was relativity. Einstein set out to understand the fact that Maxwell's equations contained within them a constant that was equal to the velocity of light in a vacuum. This constant did not change when we rewrote the equations in another coordinate system moving with constant velocity with respect to the first system. This result was completely counter-intuitive.

The applications began to take hold in the fifties and beyond. The transistor, superconductivity, and a whole host of other practical applications flowed from the days when people began to understand the nature of physical laws. Those who work in the pure sciences search for the fundamental rules of the game. They look for the overriding principles whereby the world operates. Biology may be an attempt to understand memory and consciousness; chemistry is often the search for the basic structure of molecules and how they interact. In physics, it is often a search for the most basic characteristics of physical laws. The last half-century of physics research has been in large measure concerned with symmetry. The laws of physics are beautiful to behold, and amazingly symmetrized in nature. For example, prior to 1956 it was thought that the laws of physics had no handedness; that is, if we were to deduce these laws by looking at the world in a mirror rather than directly, we would come up with the same set of laws. Then, Professor C. S. Woo, at the suggestions of T. D. Lee and C. N. Yang, showed that in the so-called weak interaction the symmetry principle was violated. Furthermore, if the

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world had been made of antiparticles rather than particles, then their laws would not be precisely the same as in the real world. In fact, much of physics research these days is devoted to an understanding of symmetry-breaking among these elementary particles.

When I started out, it never occurred to me that biology would make such fantastic strides. To me, biology meant dissecting frogs or looking at amoeba in a microscope. Today, biology is coming close to understanding the mechanism of life itself. With the understanding of DNA and the origin of memory and consciousness, we may understand at least mechanically how we and other living things work.

The alienation of the two cultures cannot be blamed entirely on the non-scientists in our midst. Scientists tend to ignore what has no meaning within science. The search for deeper meaning and for something beyond is scoffed at by people whose philosophy is totally positivist. But it is as important that scientists appreciate the search for deeper significance that motivates most people, as it is for humanists to appreciate the deep meaning of scientific exploration. I'm not saying that I want to believe in something other than positivism, but that one ought to have a conception of what lies beyond it. We must learn to communicate with each other and convey the essence of our respective fields to one another, and in this way this dichotomy, this rift between the two cultures may, we hope, disappear.

Karen Burke: Thank you.

E. O. Wilson: I think the title for this conference, "Beyond the Twilight of Reason," may have been chosen to address the growing disintegration into overspecialization and the rise of what might be called a revival of romanticism and a turning away from the ethos of scientific exploration. We have chosen to explore the rather dismaying postmodernist posture, which holds in its more extreme forms that objective truth is unobtainable, that science is just another form of discourse and that truth is what the power structure ordains it to be. Not being a sociologist of science, I can't evaluate the impact of the postmodernist trend, but I think that it probably is an element in the dissolution of the principle of a common ground of reasoning and intellectual advance as illustrated by, for instance, the increasing disintegration of college and university curricula. For example, there's been a drastic reduction in the number of universities and colleges in the last thirty years requiring anything like a core curriculum; science has been marginalized.

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Part Two. Rethinking the Western Tradition in Politics and Culture

Igor Webb: Probably no other nation is as intimately connected with the Enlightenment, for better or for worse, than the United States, created from a doctrine of self-evident truths, apprehensible by the rational faculty of every person, that together with each person's inalienable rights was seen to compose the fundaments of a Universal Man with a representative form of government.

Two centuries later, it's easy to see that we seem to have a great many petty interests without transcending unity or ideal. So as we look to the next century, we must ask whether the vision of the founders lives or whether we need to start anew. If we are to start anew, what principles can we call upon to guide us? The chair of this afternoon's panel is our trustee John Silber. He is our nation's leading college president, not because of his success as manager, fundraiser, or lobbyist, but because almost uniquely, he has exemplified the idea of a leader, of a university teacher – who can call us to our duty, raise our sights, and embody the ways and graces of genuine intellectual striving and achievement.

John Silber: It is a pleasure to be here. The last time I was on the campus of Adelphi was in 1985, when I spoke at the inauguration of Adelphi's president, Peter Diamandopoulos. And now in this centennial program, we celebrate the life of reason and of the mind.

This morning Professor Wilson offered us a brilliant overview of the power and the achievement of the sciences in their many interconnected fields. He noted three characteristics: the boundless curiosity and determination of scientists; the intense power of analysis; and the remarkable but inexplicable mysterious effectiveness of mathematics in elucidating the scientific phenomenon. Philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead derived mathematics from an analytic set of definitions. Consequently, while they could not achieve truth in mathematics, they could achieve certainty based on those definitions. It was all analytic. And yet Russell observed, two Englishmen plus two Englishmen give you four Englishmen. And for that there is no explanation in terms of analytic mathematics. There are constructivists in mathematics, such as Paul Laurentian, who pointed out that no one would fly to the moon on the basis of a set of calculations that are merely beautiful but are not true. Consequently, he proposed to derive mathematics in an entirely different way so that truth could be achieved through a constructivist approach. Yet why should true mathematics work any better in the physical uni-

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verse as an aid to science than an analytic mathematics? This insight is ancient, in that it raises a question about whether Professor Wilson is right in saying that philosophers are wrong. Because Lucithus and Democratus, Pythagoras, and especially Plato believed that mathematics was at the heart of everything. As Pythagoras observed, things are numbers. I believe that there must be some truth in their speculation, even though they probably couldn't prove it, either rigorously or otherwise.

In summary, Professor Wilson noted three distinctive elements in scientific achievement: the expansion of the senses, a point also emphasized by Professor Cohen, as he elucidated the advances made by a variety of devices, such as the telescope. A classification of data and the development of theory. In this analysis, Wilson remarked that science cuts no slack for gender or ethnicity. Here he touched on the challenge to rationality by the culture and politics in our time, the subject of this session. The assault on Western culture is an assault that treats Western culture as if it were a geographical term rather than a philosophical, historical, and cultural concept. Western culture is multicultural in its origins, from Egypt, from India, from Assyria, from many parts of the world. And its purpose has always been universal. There is no "Western" mathematics or "Western" science; there is no "Chinese" science, no "Asian" science, no "African" science, or "African" or "Asian" mathematics. The dream was the dream of the Western philosophers who just happened to be located in Greece, as they sought universal truth, not the nature of man if he was an Athenian, but the nature of man no matter what city he might live in, no matter what nation or continent. This was a repudiation of provincialism and it concerned universal truth. That is at the essence of what we refer to as Western culture. Now we face an assault on this concept of culture, in favor of the feminist story behind the story, the ethnic interpretation, the multicultural interpretation, or the deconstructivist approach to these issues.

This symposium asks the question about the relevance and usefulness of rational procedures of thought, as we approach the end of a tragically irrational century. At a time when the assault on reason and the principles of the Enlightenment come not from without but from within our universities and colleges, we face not the barbarians of old, who stormed the centers of civilization from without, but rather, the vertical barbarians of which Ortega y Gasset spoke, those who rise within the walls to attempt to tear down the civilization on which they are absolutely dependent.

These movements deny the transcendence of the human mind. They generalize the Marxist epistemology that whatever we think, whatever we believe, is a function of our relationship to something else. With the Marxists, it was our relationship to the means of production. Having

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failed politically and economically, they now retreat to the cultural ground, to the epistemology, and generalize that what one believes is a function of one's sex; or a function of one's ethnicity; a function of one's opinion when approaching a work of art or historical data. They share in common a denial of objectivity even as a goal of inquiry and reduce the search for truth to a defense of ideology. Incidentally, I find no relationship, no resemblance, between this movement and the skepticism of David Hume or Emmanuel Kant. It is the current challenge to reason and science and enlightenment which represents the twilight of reason and gives rise to the topic of this symposium, since the movements involved repudiate the sum of reason on which they are so clearly dependent.

Our first speaker is Stanley Crouch. Among his many and diverse accomplishments are a forthcoming epic novel, *Snow in Cocamo,* and a biography of Charlie Parker.

Stanley Crouch

Blues to be Redefined

Do not blaspheme. It is the gods who weep. They have watched us killing each other since the beginning of time. They cannot save us from ourselves. (RAN, Kurosawa's variation on *King Lear*)

How You Like Me Now? A Long Overture in Black and White, in Seared Flesh and Spilled Blood

Things have become so chaotic that we might sometimes think that we no longer live in the United States. Sleazemongers, from the world of politics to the public entertainments, symbolize our national ills and our difficulties with perceiving ourselves as a whole nation, the many who make the one, the rich set of improvisations and traditions that are so easily recognized as American by anyone from outside of this country. The very complex interplay between politics and society, each influencing the other only as fast as attitudes become digestible, demands that we address the influence on our sensibility of the high speed with which images succeed one another. Once ideas have become platitudes, or slogans that soak up enough emotion to affect what happens in voting booths, we see how things too often work in our society. "Don't Tread On Me,"

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"Remember the Alamo," "Tippecanoe and Tyler, Too," have evolved into what we now call the sound byte.

One of our most serious problems, however, is that our difficulties are far too complicated to fit into an era demanding that all messages last no longer than a commercial break, far too intricate to be explained clearly to an audience interested in hearing little more than two or three sentences which are supposed to function like some sort of auditory baling twine, capable of holding the protean heap of American blues in place long enough for the mythic garbage trucks of our nation to haul them away. But swirling through all of this political and intellectual fast food is a set of manifestations that says much about the condition of the American soul as it relates to the issue of rethinking the Western tradition in terms of politics and society in our world. I would first like to look at some of them and then turn to what I consider our perpetual American reserves, those ever-green ideas and impulses that have allowed us to make it this far and will surely help us to get beyond where we are now.

We find ourselves looking at a terrain on which Louis Farrakan comes close to draining all political, social, and moral seriousness from Afro-American affairs. He stands in Washington before perhaps a million men, to whom he explains what the icons and numbers on dollar bills supposedly mean. The multitudinous audience for his lunatic numerology and incoherence is made possible by an organizing apparatus extending so far outside of his racist cult that it includes churches and sororities. The exceeding bulk of that network of organizations was probably introduced to Farrakan by Benjamin Chavis, a skirt-chasing minister and sanctimonious hustler whose Christianity took a backseat to his affection for demagoguery, and whose fumblings and fondlings during his brief position as executive director of the NAACP nearly brought the organization to ruin, its concern for integration almost incinerated by racial animus.

Our American press, ever paternalistic and given to treating Negro Americans as though they are never more than savages pitifully shaking voodoo dolls at the heavens, looked upon the Million Man March as some sort of grand moment, or at least one that could be condescended to with the kind of talk about unity and self-esteem reminiscent of the antebellum barrels of molasses passed out to the slaves at the end of a good season. But there is something amiss in our country when so many fairly well-off black people, seeking some sort of unity as an answer to the ravages of urban life, gather around the ineloquent briarpatch of Farrakan's lingo, which can include stories about his own space travel and claims from his minions that the Nation of Islam has developed a cure for AIDS. It is snake oil and racial paranoia in one package.

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At the other end of the field, but actually right next to Farrakan, is Patrick J. Buchanan, who is trying to become the Tom Watson of his time, a vulgar populist whose appeal is to every veiled and unveiled form of xenophobia troubling the soul of our country. It is equally true, as one writer said of Buchanan, that he is part of a phenomenon that has spread its bile across the stretch of our mass communications network, substituting shock for substance, rage for reason, threat for thoughtful assessment. In this time, we observe politicians who realize that the drama of political insight is much harder to achieve than the voluminous insults that draw whoops and cheers from the audience. All of these diatribes on the stump fuse into a talk-television spear, jammed into the side of the body politic, itself already crucified with spikes of simple-mindedness and wearing a thorny crown of omni-directional fear and bitterness.

In the horror of the bombing of the World Trade Center by Arab extremists, and the greatest act of mass murder in American history, the Oklahoma City bombing, we are able to see two variations on the politics of rage. As Martin Peretz has pointed out, the explosions at the World Trade Center detonated our traditional idea of immigrants, whether, I might add, that idea was hostile or tolerant. Previously, even if we resented them, we thought of immigrants as people who came to America for something better than what they were getting where they had been born. The point was to move ahead, to take advantage of the public school system, the medical expertise, the job market, and the freedom to invent a way for yourself. Now we wonder if we might also be confronted with a small or large number of indoctrinated immigrants who see America as "the Great Satan" and find it perfectly reasonable to consider or commit terrorist acts that bring about death, destruction, and chaos.

If, on the other hand, the many in that federal building in Oklahoma City met eternity at the hands of native rebel groups, then we have felt once again the horror and the heartbreak wrought by some amorphous monster within, a beast whose ancestry is least traceable back to the anarchic forces that troubled the Natchez Trace of two hundred years ago, or the various badlands that moved farther and farther West, where law was always seen as the enemy. The presence of both kinds of destructive individuals truly reflects our age, where all is capable of being magnified. Whether these people arrive from outside of the country or are homegrown, they are made ominous because the nature of contemporary, destructive technology is such that those with small, porous minds can surely create large, tragic disasters.

These sorts of people and their ruthless actions also make it as hard as it has ever been for us to get beyond the surface distinctions our demo-

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cratic contract is supposed to supplant. This happened during the Civil Rights Movement period when, at too many educated social gatherings in the North, a mark of shame was automatially bestowed wherever the Southern accent rose off of a white person's tongue. This vocal inflection alone rallied suspicions of its connection to social gremlins, condescension or insulting presumptions. We most recently observed this very same tendency when so many people assumed, following the World Trade Center bombing, that the Oklahoma City tragedy must surely have been the work of Middle Eastern extremists. This prejudice, given the way the media influences us, is also fed by the actions of Hamas as it goes about its war against all Israelis, men, women, children, making no distinctions between civilians and soldiers. Yet we cannot realize ourselves within the grand scheme of our social contract if we allow attitudes toward entire groups of immigrants or native-born people to be determined by the worst actions of individuals from certain religious, geographical, and cultural categories. This pollutes our politics and our society, even when the loudest voices from those groups sometimes demand that we look at them in a special way.

There can be no greater gathering of pollutants than what we have come to accept, or gather to witness, in our popular entertainments, from television to film, in our advertisements for clothing, for perfumes, for automobiles. As the controversy surrounding the content of popular entertainment proves, I am far from alone in believing that such things have a debilitating effect on the spirit of society, on race relations, on sexual trends, on manners themselves. Such material debases what arose in America as a kind of democratic spunk, internationally famous on the charismatic basis of its unpretentious disdain for unearned privilege and for its own expression of deadpan compassion and lyrical flippancy. We are surrounded by a crass combination of cynicism and whorishness. It seeks to replace the stimulation of originality with shocking affront. Exploiting variations, played to the tune of what the jazz musician Roland Kirk called "volunteered slavery," stretch across our culture. No longer seen as the root of all evil, money is recognized as the justification for personal or collective debasement. In the dark world of profit, the quality of the product is only as significant as the public is gullible.

We cannot, in a time as uncivil as ours, fail to contemplate how manners have deteriorated and how we often find ourselves more alienated from others than we can recall ever having been. We expect abuse in public places and often get it, from foul-mouthed children to excessively rude adults. We recall the old Greek tale told by one who was perhaps a blind slave. One of the central themes of *The Odyssey* is how civilization reveals itself to the vulnerable stranger. With Odysseus we recognize, in

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situation after situation, that those who are truly civilized do not take advantage of the wandering stranger. They extend the sort of hospitality that assumes kinship and seems to foreshadow the democratic legal idea that one is innocent until proven guilty.

Sometimes I feel that part of our trouble in the area of civility arrives from both the horror stories of slavery that we have heard over the last thirty years and from an idea that we have seen evolve into terrible behavior since the middle fifties: we prove ourselves most individual when we make sure that we don't give a damn what anybody else thinks about us. What the terrible stories of humiliation during slavery have done, it seems to me, is to lead to a confusion between service and subservience. This results in people of all races giving you bad service in order to prove that they aren't inferior to you. I think the simplistic idea of not giving a damn is also an example of how our American pursuit of individuality and our nose-thumbing attitudes toward excessive and pretentious convention have been distorted. Moreover, this cavalier rudeness submits to the facelessness of the metropolis in which the kind of terrible behavior that would be chastised in the small community is possible because it is so easy to disappear within the vast urban landscape.

We cannot forget how much sheer ignorance we are witnessing as well. These people feel that they exist on a lane separate from everyone else and that in that lane they can speak whatever four-letter words they know at whatever volumes they choose, no matter who else is around. In a certain sense, they are saying that what they do makes no difference in the larger picture, just as what they feel has no effect on the course of life either. In this mixture of battered civility we should forget neither the obnoxious trash aristocracy of rock and rap, nor the millionaire athletes who have replaced sportsmanship with the thin-skinned pugnaciousness of thugs playing in the street. Then there are the many who make lower-class communities into gauntlets of perpetual threat, reminding us of what Shakespeare meant in *Henry V* when he wrote:

> And as our vineyards, fallows, meads, and hedges,
> Defective in their natures, grow to wildness,
> Even so our houses, and ourselves, and children,
> Have lost, or do not learn, for want of time,
> The sciences that should become our country;
> But grow like savages, as soldiers will,
> That nothing do but meditate on blood,
> To swearing, and stern looks, diffused attire,
> And everything that seems unnatural.

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Great googamooga: We have a hard way to go.

Moving Back to the Outskirts of History

Since our story is about the ongoing conflict between our aspirations and our discontents, the fundamental fact of our development is, essentially, redefinition. We have inherited every great idea that has come out of the Western world, especially the various ways in which the New Testament rejected the tribalism of the Old Testament, laying the foundation for what was to evolve into the secular ideas of the Enlightenment, when the conception of our common humanity was to slowly override all distinctions of national boundary, religion, and politics. As we know, this was seen as a rational rejection of xenophobia. The deep, imperishable condition was humanity; the rest was what we might now call cultural evening clothes for the infinite *bal masque*. And though most of our great arguments have to do with the relationships of style, taste, and belief to consequences, the Enlightenment opened the way for us to understand that humanity is the essence which precedes the existence of the culturally unique.

In our own democracy, an innovative sense of freedom was invented based on the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The intention was that we would be judged by our deeds, not by our backgrounds. Yet we have been long trading blows with the refinement of the tribal idea as it appears in the proposition of an aristocracy. That is because our various prejudices on the planes of race, religion, class, and sex have appeared over and over, almost always as stubborn versions of aristocratic privilege which keep us from easily realizing the grandest ideals of our democracy. This explains why our story, our evolution, is about the discontented passion that rises into action whenever our aspirations are limited by presumptions that do not hold sacred the democratic vision of no aristocracies other than those of merit. So redefinition in our nation always arrives at the point of struggle against the ideas that both deny human commonality and have been written into law, determining how we relate to one another, both on the federal and the local levels.

Today, right now, is a period of protean turmoil. The increasingly technological world is a merry-go-round moving at an ever faster clip, and we seem to find ourselves only bruising or breaking our fingers if we try to snatch the brass ring. Discontent is thick in the air, yet our aspirations may not really be, at least for now, up to the democratic vision that would ennoble them and further the strengths of the society. That is because our present moment is one of excessive narcissism, and exaggerated

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self-involvement is always at odds with democracy as a form of social order and social understanding. That narcissism shows itself in special interest groups of one distinction or another, almost all of them so hypnotized by their own mirrors that they cannot see themselves in relationship to the society at large, particularly in any way that we might call profound. So the pace of the world, the intimidating velocity that attends the machines which we hate as much as we love, and the need for a democratic vision of interconnection are what challenge us no end. As in every dark period of our history, when the sun seems to be on leave, the fog thick as an elephant's hide, and doom grooming itself to take the society out, there are those who will tell you that they know exactly which of us are to blame for all of this and just what should be done about them.

But ours is a dark period that arrives in a very unusual form. In a number of ways, we have more than we have ever had – better health, better wages, longer life spans, finer living conditions – but we are either cynical or angry about how poorly we have handled the demons of crime, ignorance, and prejudice. Our cities are now looked upon in the popular imagination as they were by hayseeds over a hundred years ago – Sodoms of violence, sexual plague, and potential catastrophe. The trend to get away, to move out into the suburbs, has reversed the motion from the rural to the urban that historically brought so much surging vitality to each metropolis, helping to define the culture and the sophistication of the country. Where the blues singer might once have sung of how the bright lights of the big city stole his baby from home, the contemporary blues of urban life weighs upon those who no longer believe in the mythic city – that place which musicals and elegant jazz big bands made into an enormous ballroom large enough for the whole society to enter, each person bringing his or her vision of romance, of community, of effervescence. Crass concerns have taken over. Those who have made their getaways from the cities angrily worry about being taxed to support incompetent bureaucracies. The poor of the cities believe that they and their children are cursed by the contempt and the neglect of the more fortunate. If those poor are members of so-called minorities, their gripes are connected to the raw and seamy aspect of our racial history.

Our problems now call for a redefinition in the direction of democratic consciousness, but a consciousness that must reassert, it seems to me, the unusual combination of tragic recognition and optimism which underlie the deepest meanings of our social contract. In *The All-American Skin Game,* I make the point that our society is organized on principles that accept the perpetual struggle between problems of power and the ideals pushed into the world by the Founding Fathers. Those men, because of their contempt for aristocratic privilege and because of their

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belief in the abilities of elected officials and those whom they represent, had insights into the nature of humanity as it makes itself felt in social terms. Their tragic sense was that we have to be able to reassert our ideals whenever the lower sides of humanity appear in the forms I am sure bedevil all societies and economic structures – folly, corruption, mediocrity, and incompetence. Those lower sides have nothing to do with democracy itself; they are built, mysteriously, into the species. The naive among us are those who assess democracy – or capitalism or both – by the shortcomings of humanity itself, while failing to recognize that our social contract, our governmental structures, allow us to perpetually redress those things we find lacking. Our governmental structure allows us to redefine our aspirations when we become discontented, when we discover that something we might have thought was correct, or that our predecessors might have believed was basic fact, is found to be – or thought to be – all wrong. Essential to our social contract is the belief that we can, eventually, handle the abuses of power, that we can move beyond our prejudices, that we can redeem our society by improvising into policy those ideas that we find to be true, those ideas that take us closer and closer to our ideals and may, finally, go far beyond what the founding fathers themselves thought about the world. Yet the tragic consciousness, founded in the perpetual possibility of readjusting our policies, acknowledges that these problems will forever appear in different forms.

There are those who make much of the prejudices of the Founding Fathers and of the fact that they weren't thinking about women or so-called minorities when they drew up those documents that have had such extraordinary impact on the nation and world. This creates a dangerous kind of cynicism and disillusionment in our young. It is a vision that appeals to young people especially, because it is a very immature way of assessing American history, one that fails to recognize that the form of our government, as I observed, allows us to redeem ourselves. It is because our social contract allows us to extend the human meanings of democracy beyond a single race or sex that it is of no consequence at this point what those brilliant men may have thought about the opposite sex or about people whose racial ingredients made them look somewhat different from all whose bloodlines led back to Europe. Their gift to this nation and the world wove together a social philosophy and a governmental form that could rediscover itself, as prejudices that were once thought of as fact were found to be no more than superstition, xenophobia's foundation of fear, loathing, and condescension. What might have seemed an essentially poetic vision of humanity was actually structured in a way that would allow us to make the most of the rational, as our beliefs were empirically and scientifically adjusted.

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It is important to always realize that we have a very special relationship to the poetic and the rational, since the conception of rights is itself a poetic thing, while the social organization of law arrived at through debate, or adjusted through one version or another of the amendment, presumes the eventual victory of reason over limited vision. The very idea of rights moves away from the absolutes of force that we observe in the natural world, where pecking orders almost always are established by strength. The vision of rights is one of compassion and is what has led our nation to make the difficult changes that allow the weak as much access to the benefits of our society as possible. Following that, it seems to me that one of the highest points in all of Western history was the development of the Abolition Movement, which arrived at a time when there were none of the scientific discoveries in place that now so easily refute the bases of racial prejudice. The Abolitionists were able to see more and more clearly through the superficial differences in skin color, physiognomy, and hair texture, recognizing that a portion of humanity had been immorally bought and sold through the institution of bondage. In a very real way that poetic vision of rights and of humanity anticipated scientific truth. As that movement grew, the debate over slavery became one of the most dramatic in our history and led, finally, to the bloodiest war this nation has ever fought. That very war between the states shows us another tragic aspect of our history and proves that however much we may be committed to the rational winning out over the irrational, we must also accept the cruel truth that sometimes there is no other way to deal with the irrational outside of literal war – the killing, dismembering, wounding, and maiming of the opposition in the interest of greater freedom. It is highly doubtful that the Founding Fathers ever foresaw such a bloody conflict over the issue of slavery, but since the very existence of the United States could arrive only through those same means, it was a logical evolution of the values that they themselves had shed blood for. Men like George Washington knew the literal meanings of blood, sweat, and tears. They had heard the cries of battle and the cries afterward. The road to freedom is slick and sticky with blood and flesh.

A close examination of the Abolition Movement itself reveals that only a small number of its members were actually committed to universal humanity and that Negro Americans had to struggle within the movement for recognition of their entire humanity. That is but another example of how our finest ideas are not always fully appreciated by those who think that they are speaking for the best kind of social evolution. At the same time, we have to recognize – let me say this once more – that ideas within our nation are things that evolve on the basis of engagement and debate. We rarely have anything delivered to us in a perfect form and

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find our fate one that is the result of our arguing toward the richest meanings of those ideas, our pushing what might not be thoroughly thought out – or thoroughly accepted – towards its grandest applications. If we are lucky.

That is why we find ourselves in such a mess. We are always struggling toward extending the very highest aspects of the Enlightenment. Our job is one of constantly fighting our way beyond every prejudicial sense of the world, whether they come from within or from without. This is the reason that race and sex have remained such complex problems in our society. We all have had to deal with the idea that white skin means something far more important than a color; we all have had to deal with the idea that being born a male means more than being born a female. We have also had to deal with the variety of class prejudices that sweeps aside the idea that quality can arrive from any class within the society. While the follies and corruptions of Marxist societies are now obvious the world over, this is also ice-cold fact, as I say in an essay entitled "Melting Down the Iron Suits of History": "We in the United States, which is the most successful commercial culture in the history of the world, maintain a running battle with the most corrupt manifestations of capitalism. American citizens are familiar with scandals involving government contracts, price-fixing, insider trading, the willful sale of dangerously shoddy products, money laundering, hell-for-leather pollution, and the rest of it." That is one of our great virtues, that we seek out the most civilized version of capitalism, which means bringing together morality, ethics, and the profit motive. But our American story is the story of working toward an understanding of universal potential, of coming to terms with all the representatives of humanity at large who find themselves players of one sort or another in the national tale. Perhaps, because the realization of our ideals is such a difficult job, we have forgotten exactly what our society truly means. Perhaps, because we have had so many failures in social policy, we are willing to sink down into this or that version of tribalism.

Wrong Way Wretched of the Earth Breakdown

What did Max Weber, whose definition of politics as the use of power you were riffing on, say? Only those who realize how awful and self-destructive and so on people can be and still pay dues for the privilege of administering their affairs truly have talent for politics. Something like that. (Albert Murray, *South to a Very Old Place*)

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Our politics have been influenced by our virtues as well as our tragic exemplifications of the lower inclinations of humanity. It is quite easy, therefore, to celebrate our most noble visions, while denying our shortcomings. It is also easy to emphasize our shortcomings, while denying our most noble traditions. All of this is the result of the fact that we too often fail to understand the complexity of what we find ourselves in the middle of, refusing to see just how hard it is to realize a democratic sense of life and society. That is why I believe that we periodically slump into the kind of balkanized rage that expresses itself across race, sex, and class in our time. We are then retreating to a stance that falls short of a true democratic sensibility.

In our time, I would say that this is a version of what Arthur Schlesinger calls "the cycles of American history." In the terms of this discussion, we must look closely at those who so adamantly see themselves as outside of American privilege that they have embraced the idea of exclusion and have created a political vision in which the majority is all wrong and the minority is all right. This is something I trace in our recent history to the emergence of Black Power, which spurned the conceptions of the Civil Rights Movement in the interest of a politics not based on the achievement of equality, but one rooted in race and highly inaccurate colonial metaphors.

Due to the popularity and eventual canonization of Malcolm X, there was a very strong separatist feeling in the radical air. Discussion was dominated by assertions of the Negro's alienation from America at large and the fact that the Negro shared a common fate with colonials the world over, almost all of whom were in revolt against the Western world and capitalism. I choose to investigate this aspect of our recent history because it was an essential part of what led to the ethnic and sexual narcissism that presently hampers our ability to speak to one another across categories. It is also another telling example of the difference between what Americans come to believe about themselves and what their actual experience and history is.

What the Caribbean or African colonial often feels, as revealed by so much of the writing on the subject, whether fictional or polemical or both, is far removed from American experience. The most obvious differences are found in issues that pivot, from the beginning, on geographical and historical relationships to those who dominate politically and economically. The colonial knews that his or her people had essentially nothing to do with the creation of what gives uniqueness of style and attitude to the mother country, which is far, far away. The colonial provided no more than the subjugated labor that prepared the exported raw materials destined to fuel some part of the engine of modern life in

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the Western mother countries – no body of ideas, no technological innovations or refinements, no high position in the moral and social discourse, no deep aesthetic impact.

In terms of the Negro American, the problem was very different. Negroes were not like Africans trying to take back land that had been appropriated through imperial means; they were not dislocated colonials who grew up in countries where economics rotated around a few cash crops; Negroes were central to the development of all that we consider American. As participants or representatives of issues, they had been on the frontline at almost every important turning point in the history of the United States, from the true moment of colonial liberation in the Revolutionary War to the arguments over the way slavery repudiated both democratic purity and Christian morality, to the Civil War, to the winning of the West, to the World Wars, to the evolution of a national music, a national sense of humor, a national body of dance, and a twentieth-century way of living in urban situations. So whenever Negroes began thinking of themselves as a "black colony" within America, they were accepting a blindfold.

Right now, I would say that the blindfold has been accepted by many of those in categories outside of the province of race. One group after another seems to have done its own variations on Black Power alienation, perceiving itself, whether because of its sex or its sexual preferences or its age or its class, as some variation on a colony at odds with the United States, feeling good or safe or understood only within its special interest group, convinced that, in a nearly conspiratorial way, the government, or the rich or the poor, the men or the women, the immigrants or the foreigners are out to get them – lying in wait to take almost all that they own or give them less than they deserve, for sins as simple as either having done a hard day's work or having lasted long enough to get some retirement benefits, as having done no more than pop out of a normally or artificially inseminated womb on American soil.

So many have accepted the blindfold, in fact, that we are back to the blind feeling up the elephant, the donkey, and the marketplace. Almost every shape that they touch either frightens them or seems much less than what they were promised by politicians since the end of World War II. It is sometimes hot where they expected it to be cold, rough where they thought it smooth, sharp where they figured on something blunt. Where they wanted the sensation of paradise, those knotting their own blindfolds ever tighter find themselves mad as hell and tired of being misled. As Robert J. Samuelson observes in *The Good Life And Its Discontents: The American Dream in the Age of Entitlement 1945-1995,* such people suffer from what he calls "the politics of over-promise."

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That brings us to my conclusion, which is based in the need for a reiteration of the tragic optimism I earlier described as basic to our social contract, the form through which we do our best against folly, corruption, mediocrity, and incompetence. I believe the reiteration of that attitude is the mark to which our politicians have to rise. In what George Will calls "our therapeutic culture," reiterating that vision is far from easy to do, primarily because we believe that either through humiliating ourselves publicly or giving vent to our "true feelings," we will be on the road to health, or at least on the way to the pharmacy with the right prescription. The various strains of anger and xenophobia that we find in just about every place we travel to in our land are not unreal; they are misguided and they are vented either loudly or in whispers. Many of these strains are the results of having been given the impression that, some day, life was going to be a crystal stair leading to some sort of utopia, another point Robert J. Samuelson makes. But the conception of a utopia is a conception that has no time for tragic facts and is a revolt against the harsh and unpredictable nature of the world. On one front we are susceptible to utopian thinking because our quite successful handling of so many threats to our lives has reduced a good number of the kinds of deaths that were commonplace before the arrival of penicillin and other "wonder drugs." These developments in modernization have encouraged us to follow whomever will most passionately guarantee that we will make it toHeaven on earth. Heaven, of course, is nowhere to be found. We just happen to have gotten closer as a nation than any other country in history.

I do not believe that we can handle our problems of race, class, sex, the environment, and so on until we accept our limitations and understand that there are problems that will not be solved at the same velocity that information presently travels through our technology. As Senator Moynihan said a few years ago about our social ills, "It took us thirty years to get into this mess and it'll probably take us about thirty years to get out of it." We should take heed of his observation, however daunting it might seem to those in a rush to get every crimp immediately straightened. The story of life is always the tale of the journey from a revelatory conception to the execution of the idea, which may be short this time, long the next. We are in a time when we have to redefine our aspirations and discover when our discontents are rational and when they are not. It is perhaps most necessary that we have leaders, regardless of party, regardless of right, middle, or left, who have the patience and the courage and the eloquence to come forward with a convincing sense of humanity, allowing us to acknowledge ourselves not only as what we are but as what we can be. Such leadership, from the local to the national level,

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should eventually draw those disengaged millions back into the political process. One never knows. As ever, our story is one everybody on the face of the earth follows. Our society has been the dark horse and it has been the Triple Crown Winner. Perhaps that is how we have to see ourselves, as jockeys moving in and out of the light with our mounts, winning, losing, improvising, learning, making great jumps, taking horrible falls, but always refusing to give an ear to anything less than the tragic optimism of the blues to be redefined.

John Silber: Thank you. Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb will comment. She is Professor of History Emeritus in the Graduate School of the City University of New York.

Gertrude Himmelfarb

Redefining Our Ideals

Stanley Crouch describes himself as a "tragic optimist." I like to think of myself as a "cheerful pessimist." At least, that is the condition I aspire to. I've never quite succeeded in achieving it; pessimism tends to trump cheerfulness. That is particularly true today, for all the reasons we have just heard. At the moment, however, I find myself in a state of uncommon cheerfulness. Things cannot be all bad when we have, among our most distinguished public intellectuals, someone as wise and eloquent as Mr. Crouch.

The causes for pessimism – the "tragic sense" Mr. Crouch speaks of – are all too evident in our public life today. For some time, some of us were able to comfort ourselves (although it was small comfort at that) that the race-class-gender mantra – the categories that are presumed to govern and determine all subjects – was confined to academia (not this university, to be sure, nor Dr. Silber's, but most universities – the generic university, as it were). That mantra has had the most unfortunate effects: It is divisive, setting every group against every other; subversive, undermining the common core of knowledge that was at the heart of the curriculum; and ultimately nihilistic, denying the very idea of truth that was once the aspiration of scholars and students alike, of whatever color, sex, or ethnic and economic background.

Unhappily, that mantra has now pervaded all the institutions of society, with predictably disastrous consequences. Differences of race, class, and gender have been so magnified and distorted that we now have a so-

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ciety that is consumed, as Mr. Crouch points out, by racial and ethnic animosity, that is compulsively litigious, and that (as Professor Schlesinger has demonstrated) is threatening to transform "E Pluribus Unum" into "Ex Uno Plura." (Vice President Gore once translated that motto, for those whose Latin was rusty, as "From the one, many." That gaffe testifies to the unfortunate reality.)

So much for the "tragic" side of Mr. Crouch's disposition. But there is that other side, the optimist in him, which calls for a "redefinition" of the social contract to give proper recognition to the ideals and aspirations of our democratic polity. That redefinition will take us back to the Enlightenment, with its vision of a common humanity, and to the founding principles of our country, with the idea of a democracy based on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But even in his optimism, Mr. Crouch is cautious. There is nothing utopian in his redefinition; on the contrary, he is resolutely anti-utopian. Even as he pays tribute to the nobility of the Abolitionists in pursuing the highest ideals of the Enlightenment, he is fully cognizant of the "lower sides of humanity" exhibited in the vices bedeviling all societies: "folly, corruption, mediocrity, and incompetence."

As I heard this, I was reminded of the Founding Fathers, who were acutely aware of the frailties of human nature, and who at the same time insisted that the new regime could sustain itself only if its citizens were capable of exercising a proper degree of "republican virtue," a concern for the public interest. James Madison was the quintessential tragic optimist: "As there is a degree of depravity in mankind which requires a certain degree of circumspection and distrust, so there are other qualities in human nature which justify a certain portion of esteem and confidence. Republican government presupposes the existence of these qualities in a higher degree than any other form."

This was the genius of the American Revolution. It was a successful revolution because, unlike the French Revolution, it was a modest, sober revolution, a revolution where idealism was tempered by realism. And the Constitution – with its checks and balances, rights and obligations, federal structure of government, and limitations on power – was the embodiment of this same double vision, the vision of the "twice-born," William James called it, of those who carried with them the painful knowledge of good and evil.

Recently, confronted by an overweening government that has sorely tried the limits of the Constitution, there has been much talk of the devolution of government – the transfer of power from the federal government to state and local governments. More important is the next stage of devolution, from government at all levels to civil society – families,

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communities, religious institutions, private enterprises and organizations – the "voluntary associations" that Tocqueville believed to be the unique feature of American life. (I don't often have the occasion – or the temerity – to quarrel with Tocqueville, but I think he was not doing justice to England, where such voluntary associations were quite as plentiful and important as in America.) In any case, it is to this civil society that many of us now look for surcease from some of the troubles that afflict us. It is here that we look for a revival of individual responsibility, family stability, communal commitments, and, not least, civility in manner and conduct.

Civil society, to be sure, is no panacea. For it itself has been enfeebled, not only by an overzealous government that has usurped the natural functions of individuals, families, and communities, but by a culture that has permeated and corrupted many of the institutions of civil society. Thus some of the most influential educational innovations of recent years have been initiated and promoted by the most prestigious and powerful institutions of civil society – private foundations, teachers' unions, even universities. The most controversial projects funded by the National Endowment for the Arts have been proudly exhibited in local museums and staunchly supported by the cultural elites of those communities. Local cable channels routinely bring hard-core porn into the living room. And even churches (mainstream as well as new-age) have contributed to the moral laxity of society. Nor is the family, the bedrock of civil society, in better shape; witness the prevalence of illegitimacy, divorce, and transient "relationships," of neglected or over-indulged children, of "dysfunctional" families and households in which the main cultural vehicle is television with its incessant promiscuity and violence. Moreover, civil society has been so fragmented and polarized, as a result of multiculturalism, affirmative action, radical feminism, and racism (black and white), that there is little coherence or commonality left in that society. Instead of being a common ground for the working out of common problems, it has become an arena of warring interests and groups.

What is required, therefore, is not only a restoration of civil society but a re-moralization of civil society. The *Federalist Papers* enjoin us to find "a republican remedy for the diseases most incident to a republican government." The revival of civic virtues – republican virtues, the Founders would have said – is just such a "republican remedy" for the disorders of our time. It is not an easy remedy, but then the Founders never believed there were easy remedies for difficult problems.

This is why Mr. Crouch's tragic optimism – or, it may be, my cheerful (at least intermittently cheerful) pessimism – is so pertinent today. We are heartened by the fact that finally, reluctantly, more and more people are facing up to the disagreeable realities of our society. There are

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some, to be sure, who are still in a state of denial, arguing that the rising statistics of crime are only a reflection of the improved reporting of crime, or that the increase of illegitimacy and single-parent families is an innocuous "alternative life-style," or that our society is so fatally racist that black racism is an appropriate response to white racism. But such arguments are less frequently heard today – except, perhaps, in those academic cloisters where ideology still prevails over reality.

It is a great achievement that we have come so far, that we are now able to take a proper measure of our problems and to seek remedies for them – to redefine, as Mr. Crouch enjoins us to do, our aspirations and our discontents. That is indeed cause for tragic optimism – or cheerful pessimism.

John Silber: Thank you. Our first panelist is David Fromkin, Professor of International Relations, History, and the Law at Boston University.

David Fromkin: Stanley Crouch and Gertrude Himmelfarb are hard acts to follow.

It is no news to anyone in this audience that the concept of the West versus the East as two contrasting sets of values is one that we owe to fifth-century Greece. Under modern critical scrutiny, however, it is clear that in one way, part of that concept does not hold up. The East is too various to be placed under one heading. There is no one Asia. But the concept of the West is one that remains cogent, coherent, and meaningful. It also is broader in its origins than was once thought. If this meeting had been taking place a hundred years ago, we would have thought that the ideals of the West were those that we owed not just principally but perhaps almost exclusively to Greece and Rome. The politics of the West are indeed those that we take from Herodotus, and from the funeral oration of Pericles as reported to us by Thucydides. But in the course of the last hundred years, the West also has discovered and acknowledged the strong Middle Eastern roots of Western civilization. Modernism, a product of Western thought, rests on the verifiable and therefore is of unversal validity. However, amongst the opponents of Western thought – rational thought, secular thought, scientific thought – there are many who now maintain, wrongly, that the scientific outlook typical of Western civilization is a mere myth, no better than anybody else's myth. I take this comment from the zoologist Richard Dawkins: whenever any one of us allows Delta Airlines or American Airlines or British Airways to take us 35,000 feet up in the sky, we had better hope that Western science is not a mere myth.

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John Silber: Our final panelist is Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.: I think we've all benefited from Stanley Crouch's witty and eloquent paper, and from the commentary of Gertrude Himmelfarb and David Fromkin. I would very much endorse and herewith appropriate Stanley Crouch's fine phrase "tragic optimism." That, indeed, seems to me to express both the mood in which the United States was founded and the essential hope and meaning of democracy. The United States was unique or almost unique among countries. It was founded on a creed, explicitly adopted. It was defined not by common ethnic origins but by common adherence to a set of principles. This, as they say, made it exceptional among nation-states. The principles were those appropriately summed up in the phrase "tragic optimism," the ideals of the Enlightenment, the rights of man, the common vision of humanity – Enlightenment ideals modified and enriched by a Calvinist sense of human frailty and corruptibility. The United States was not based on illusions about the perfectibility of man. As Bryce said, the Constitution was "the work of men who believed in original sin and were resolved to leave open for transgressions no door which they could possibly shut." They believed, therefore, that a proper government must guard against the weakness, against the corruptibility, against the self-destructiveness and self-pride of the human ego. Reinhold Niebuhr summed it up in that mighty sentence, "Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination towards injustice makes democracy necessary."

The people who gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 saw themselves as engaged in an experiment against history. History told them of the "republican" cycle. The republics of the classical world instilled a sense of an irreversible cycle where austerity led to wealth and wealth to corruption and decay. They felt themselves engaged in an experiment against that history. The word "experiment" recurs in the discussions of the era, in George Washington's first Inaugural and in the *Federalist Papers*. It was an experiment was founded on what they conceived as democracy's capacity for self-correction.

The Constitution proposed certain standards of rights, certain promises explicit and implicit, and it also set up a legal structure that would enable those who felt themselves to have been wronged to claim their rights. It set up therefore an abiding and inherent tension between our ideals and our behavior, between our professions and our performance, between, as Stanley said, our aspirations and our discontents. Gunar Myrdal, in his great work of half a century ago, *American Dilemma,* wrote that Americans are engaged in an abiding struggle for the American soul. That struggle derives from our continuing efforts to make our performance live

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up to our professions, make our behavior live up to our ideals. The American experience has been the experience of drawing out the latent implications of the charters on which we are founded, extending the human meanings of democracy. It is a struggle that has gone on fitfully, erratically, but rather continuously, a struggle among other things from exclusion to inclusion in our society.

We must acknowledge that this philosophy of history is putting democracy under new strain. Two centuries ago, the industrial revolution helped usher democracy into the world, completing the overthrow of feudalism, of hierarchical society, creating a new social need for literacy and education, creating new avenues of social mobility and individual achievement. I think we are going through, today, a change in the structure of our society as fundamental as the industrial revolution.

The industrial revolution meant a shift from a farm-based economy to a factory-based economy. The revolution we are going through today is a shift from a factory-based economy to a computer-based economy. This may be more traumatic in its impact than the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution after all was spread out over a couple of generations, allowing time for human adjustments that would have been unbearable if compressed within a shorter period. The industrial revolution also produced more employment than it did dis-employment. The computer revolution is highly compressed, and thus more traumatic in its effects. It also promises more disemployment than employment.

The consequences of these changes will subject democracy itself to new strains. We already see this in our politics today. The middle classes of America looked upon economic insecurity with complacency so long as it was confined to the working class. But now under the euphemism of downsizing, they see themselves as victims of economic insecurity. The recent series in *The New York Times* suggests the sense of foreboding which has been produced by these deep structural changes, the sense of free-floating anxiety, of anger, indeed of panic. There are middle-aged, middle-class, middle-management-level people losing their jobs under the pressure of technological changes with which they feel completely at sea. They now suddenly realize that technological change is making them obsolescent. No wonder we have a politics of rage tapped by people like Pat Buchanan. This free-floating anxiety, I think, is derived from structural change. The question ahead of us is whether the rather tragic optimism of democracy will be able to survive this new structural change in our society. Having heard Stanley Crouch's stirring words, I remain a tragic optimist.

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John Silber: I should hesitate to close this session without allowing for at least two or three questions.

Audience: Professor Himmelfarb, when you stated that a resurgence of morality in America was what was called for right now, I wanted to know if you meant something more than just simple respect for others. If so, I don't understand what we could base that on. To base it on religion would lead to exclusion of other religious groups. To base it on economic policies or racial ideals would still exclude segments of the population. I don't understand in what way morality can become a more inclusive thing without rejecting people.

Gertrude Himmelfarb: You say you have a problem with my notion of morality. Do you have a problem with my notion, or with most people's notion, of *im*morality – that is, the whole complex of what we now call the "social pathology" of our time: crime, welfare dependency, illegitimacy, functional illiteracy, drug addition, alcoholism, and so on? These are surely social evils that in the old days would have been called "vices" or symptoms of immorality. It's that kind of immorality that I would very much like to rectify. That is what I mean when I speak of the demoralization of our society. It is a correction of that that I would like to see by way of a re-moralization of society. It is often said that one can't legislate morality. Well, we have legislated morality in fact. Civil rights laws did just that; they not only made discrimination unlawful, they also made it morally impermissible, illegitimate. That was a very important instance of the legislating of morality. In recent years we have seen a lot of legislating of immorality. A great many of our social policies have led to very unfortunate moral consequences for this society. It's the undoing of a good deal of those policies and that kind of legislation that I think would be the starting point for something like a remoralization of society.

Dr. Silber: Next question?

Audience: I'm not sure if I would agree with you on your concept of morality, but when you list illegitimacy as a social evil or something that's immoral, you're going to raise a generation that thinks of themselves as bastards, since there is a large number of illegitimate children. That attitude is very pervasive; it is going to attack their sense of self-esteem and make them not want to be successful. It's going to lower their self-worth. So I'd be careful.

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Gertrude Himmelfarb: If these are poor circumstances in which to raise children, shouldn't we be trying to correct those circumstances? How do we try to do so, apart from trying to devise policies, social institutions, social sanctions, and so forth, that will at least for the future correct that problem?

Stanley Crouch: I think self-esteem is overrated. Reading the diaries of distinguished people, we find revealed a lot of insecure people – who don't think they look good, who are afraid their children don't like them, that other people don't like them. They're not necessarily confident that they're doing as well as they should, but they keep working at something.

Audience: I would like to direct a question both to Professor Himmelfarb and Mr. Crouch. You both have decried the decline of civil society and advocated its renaissance. What specific, concrete proposals besides moral exhortation do you have to put forth, to lay the foundations for the renaissance of the civil society?

Gertrude Himmelfarb: The most immediate one is to get the heavy hand of government out of the lives of people, so that they can finally take charge of their own lives, both as individuals and as communities, and restore the kinds of institutional arrangements that people did have before government played this enormous role. I happen not to be a libertarian; I think there is a proper role for government. It has far exceeded that role in recent years and has prevented the normal institutions and associations of people from asserting themselves.

Stanley Crouch: I think it's a problem that has to be addressed on a number of fronts. We have for instance this clichéd idea, developed in the media and popular entertainment, that obnoxious behavior is some form of legitimate individuality on the part of the young. And that one achieves individuality primarily by rebelling against society during adolescence. I think that's something that came in after World War II. It's fascinating to look at certain films from earlier periods, and see that the younger people were depicted as people who could become individuals by affirming what was significant in the society in his or her own way. I think that we should reiterate that there are remarkably good things in American life that give enormous latitute to individual interpretation; these valuable qualties have to do with much more than rebellion, which has become a commodity.

We forget that in the course of American history, people often aspired to things beyond their backgrounds. One of the problems today is

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that people are told, you are your background. If you aspire to something beyond, you suffer from wanting to be something you're not. The point I am making is that across all disciplines, sports, journalism, popular entertainment for young people, we have a vision of each other that has to be changed. Not change in the interest of repression, but in the interest of variety.

John Silber: Thank you all.

Part Three. Art and Culture

Igor Webb: Adelphi trustee Hilton Kramer will chair this panel.

Hilton Kramer: Thank you very much. My own view of the Enlightenment is that it marks the dawn of the modern age, in which all of the conditions and problems of creating art come to the surface, in a way they had never before. The best book I know of on the subject is Paul Johnson's *The Beginning of the Modern Age*. The conditions under which the arts and cultural life generally are created are those governed by the spirit of intellectual emancipation, the spirit of liberal culture, and the resistance to the spirit of liberal culture. The secularization of art in culture and the resistance to it. I have no idea if that is how the subject is going to be discussed this morning, because we're dealing here with rugged individualists, but I don't see how those issues could be avoided.

Our speaker this morning is Denis Donoghue, the distinguished Irish critic and literary scholar, who occupies the Henry James Professorship in English at New York University. His most recent book is a very fine study of the English writer Walter Pater.

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Denis Donoghue

What Literature Does

Near the end of *The Voices of Silence* André Malraux adverts to the "museum without walls" that contains every manifestation of art available to him. The creativity those works embody, he says, constitutes "man's victorious presence" in the world. Rising further to hyperbole, he says:

> Each of the masterpieces is a purification of the world, but their common message is that of their existence, and the victory of each individual artist over his servitude, spreading like ripples on the sea of time, implements art's eternal victory over the human situation. All art is a revolt against man's fate.

Malraux's tone is one we can hardly share. Forty years after the publication of *The Voices of Silence*, we wonder how he found it possible to speak of victory over the human situation, just a few years after World War II, with images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the death camps at Auschwitz and Belsen inescapably before his mind. I don't think we are ready to speak in such glowing terms, even on the evidence of art and its plenitude.

But there is a sense in which Malraux's claim is valid. If we measure it in relation to the servitude to which he refers, and the human condition which he hardly needs to delineate, the formula in a somewhat muted tone becomes serviceable. Art is indeed man's revolt against his fate. Presumably there are people who are content to coincide with their fate and rest upon it, but artists do not see themselves in that posture. In one degree or another they stand apart from their fate – or from their sense of its obduracy – and they have the creative force to contest its ordinances. They do so because they want to participate in the general culture, but only on their own terms, which coincide with the terms of responsibility they divine in the history of art.

Malraux doesn't indicate, in *The Voices of Silence*, what he thinks man's fate is. He reserves that for his novels. But it can hardly be anything else than the welter of limiting conditions we have to bear: our bodies, time, the friction of daily life, the pressure of impersonal force, guilt, loss, death, our blankness in the face of "first and last things." Some of these are indicated, briefly and appallingly, in T. S. Eliot's poem, "Little Gidding":

> First, the cold friction of expiring sense

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Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.
Second, the conscious impotence of rage
At human folly, and the laceration
Of laughter at what ceases to amuse.
And last, the rending pain of re-enactment
Of all that you have done and been; the shame
Of motives late revealed, and the awareness
Of things ill done and done to others' harm
Which once you took for exercise of virtue.

There is more, but that is enough.

In this passage, Eliot presents the human condition in its physical, spiritual, and moral bearing. We feel, behind these manifestations, the force of a religious vision and a metaphysical aura. Many people do not accept Eliot's religious belief or anyone else's. To those people, our fate is entirely social and personal; it consists of the authority we submit to, the local conditions, the ideology that bewilders us or suppresses our bewilderment. Those people construe culture as the social body, the concatenation of practices within which they live their daily lives. The claims of religion and metaphysics are quietly discounted; or, if not, they are deemed to be active only in the privacy of ethical relations.

In the West, the general culture for most people means the conventions and practices of the liberal democratic state, the public arena of modern democracy. Such a state is not universal – we have proof from every continent that it isn't – but the idea of a liberal democratic state is virtually a universal aspiration. Those who haven't got it want it. The Soviet Union broke down not because of military or economic pressure but because of television and air travel. Images of the apparently abundant middle-class life that many Russian people saw in the West proved far more attractive than the Marxist promise of social transformation, long delayed. The resurgence of the Communist Party in Russia is a sign of frustration: the benefits supposed to arise from Boris Yeltsin's administration – ownership of land, free markets, and an open economy – have been disappointing. Meanwhile local conflicts of identity and historical definition have declared themselves.

Not that the establishment of liberal democracy has put an end to human misery in the West or to the turbulence of history, as some social critics think it should. The main objection I have to Francis Fukuyama's book, *The End of History and the Last Man* – as a case in point – turns upon its title. An end implies a beginning and a narrative development

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between them. There are serious problems in presenting history as a genetic or teleological process. Fukuyama argues that history has ended with the victory of the modern liberal state. The argument is persuasive so long as you define history as the contest of social classes from which your favorite class is to emerge victorious. If liberal democracy is your chosen political mode, you can then tell a story of a beginning, perhaps a middle, and an end in that felicity. But history is not merely, or always, a contest of classes; it is often a contest of races, nationalities, castes, religions. Conflict in Northern Ireland is not a contest of classes but of people of much the same social class who feel themselves otherwise different, and mutually threatened in their difference. The difference is one of religious and historical experience. Conflict in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia is not between social classes. But I agree with Fukuyama that if you construe history as the struggle of social classes, then history may be said to have ended with the emergence of the modern bourgeois liberal state. It is implausible that a society which has developed to the point of a secure liberal democracy is going to yearn for a further categorical development. Everyone wants an improvement in the political form – liberal democracy – but not a new, unthought-of form. Members of any unhappy social class now want to be middle-class, preferably in its highest reaches.

But it would be a serious error to conclude that we have moved into a condition in which we are free to create ourselves and to float through a weightless life. John Searle has noted, in his recent book, *The Construction of Social Reality*, that the widespread carelessness in intellectual debate in our society is a symptom of something worse:

> It is somehow satisfying to our will to power to think that "we" make the world, that reality itself is but a social construct, alterable at will and subject to future changes as "we" see fit. Equally, it seems offensive that there should be an independent reality of brute facts – blind, uncomprehending, indifferent, and utterly unaffected by our concerns.

People want the world to yield to their desires.

The bearing of this on the relation between literature and culture is fairly clear. We can now revise Malraux's formula to read: Art is the revolt of artists against the liberal democratic state. Or rather: art is one of the forms in which gifted men and women express dissatisfaction with social conditions which, for the most part, they find agreeable. These expressions of dissatisfaction have a further quality: they exercise, in each case, the artist's capacity to invent images and rhythms not given by na-

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ture or by the general culture. Maurice Blanchot speaks of sculpture as setting out "a rebellious space in the center of space." So there is no contradiction in saying that the stance of art is dissent and that it is simultaneously creative, a force of invention and wonder. Sometimes an artist's delight in exercising his fictive and creative capacity is such that it is hard to see in the work any discontent or resentment. When I first saw the windows of Matisse's chapel at Vence, I found it hard to believe that he was doing anything but celebrating a world in which faith, color, and form were as elemental as earth, air, fire, and water. But there is still a critical intent at work. If Matisse were content with nature or the general culture, he would pay it the tribute of imitation. That is not enough. An artist's mind wants more. In his Preface to the 1815 edition of his poems, Wordsworth speaks of the poetic imagination as "the mind in its activity, for its own gratification" presenting objects and events not as they literally are but as the writer chooses to see them. In *King Lear* the person who gathers samphire is not hanging on the cliffs of Dover, but Shakespeare's imagination chooses to think of him as so hanging. The choice maintains Shakespeare's imagination at a distance from what it sees, and aside from it. There is a certain ironic disposition at work.

This is to say that the general stance of the most serious modern writing has been critical, interrogative, and ironic. Thomas Mann said that the motive of modern literature was to enable people to escape from the middle class. That's not quite true. The stronger motive is to enjoy middle-class satisfactions while imagining still better relations within that class, better in the sense of more flexible, more susceptible to one's desire, one's vision. Kenneth Burke spoke of literature as trying to prevent society from becoming too completely, too hopelessly, itself. The law of the imagination is: when in Rome, do as the Greeks. I would revise that formula to read: when in Rome, do as the Romans if you must, but otherwise think and feel and desire as the Greeks. R. P. Blackmur said that the true business of literature, as of all intellect, critical or creative, is to remind the powers that be, simple and corrupt as they are, of the turbulence they have to control. The imagination of that turbulence is the burden of modern literature, as in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Eliot's "The Waste Land."

I shall come to this another way by saying that insofar as modern liberal democratic societies are predicated upon the Enlightenment, a scientific view of reality, and some version of pragmatism or positivism, literature is disposed to question the orthodoxy those values entail. I take it that the Enlightenment was a secular translation of a theology of redemption, and that while much was lost or discarded in the translation, the ambition of redemption was retained in a mundane form and sub-

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mitted to worldly verification. The *Paradiso* was replaced by *The Song of the Earth*. The values of positivism and science are evident in their practical bearing, and we are indebted to them for better health, more convenient forms of transportation, and a thousand such blessings, but serious literature can hardly be content with those values inasmuch as they claim to be comprehensive. Literature is inclined to say to adepts of Enlightenment, positivism, and science: I appreciate what you are doing, but don't be so sure that your sense of life comprehends life; there is more to it than you know. Isn't it possible that the order you have prescribed on the authority of reason is only a particular exemplar of order in general? Aren't there other forms of order, economies not at all linear, consecutive, deductive; forms – as in modern art and music and literature – in which one constituent goes with another because of esoteric consanguinities which can't be predicted but by the same token can't be refuted?

I should try to say what forms the artistic revolt against man's fate has taken. I begin with an obvious one; that genuine artists mind their own business rather than the world's business. They stick to their job, as Eliot said in praise of the particular form of "art for art's sake" practiced by Flaubert and Henry James. They stand apart from the hubbub of daily life, at least to the extent of pursuing the values of their craft, which are rarely those of the marketplace. In *The Renaissance* Walter Pater paid the highest tribute to Raphael's artistic conscientiousness by saying that he "stood still to live upon himself." One of Henry James's parables of the same conscientiousness is a short story called "The Next Time" in which a professional novelist, Ray Limbert, tries year by year to write a popular novel, in an effort to support his family, only to find himself failing through the insistence of his artistic conscience. In the end he gives up the attempt and floats away "into a grand indifference, into a reckless consciousness of art." What had happened was "that he had quite forgotten whether he had generally sold or not." He had merely woken up one morning again "in the country of the blue and had stayed there with a good conscience. . . ." The country of the blue is the place an imagination consulting its own desires invents for itself. It is the space that artists and visionaries invent, where they can stand still for the time being to live upon themselves. Yeats imagines such a space, and the power of mind to hold it, in these lines and the refrain from "Long-Legged Fly":

> That civilisation may not sink,
> Its great battle lost,
> Quiet the dog, tether the pony
> To a distant post.
> Our master Caesar is in the tent

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Where the maps are spread,
His eyes fixed upon nothing,
A hand under his head.

Like a long-legged fly upon the stream
His mind moves upon silence.

Silence is Yeats's word for "the perfection of standing aside" – Blackmur's phrase for the quality of Marianne Moore's poems – which artists and men and women of distinction choose against the mundane, noisy perfections that satisfy them in other moods and for the most part. It corresponds, in Yeats's *A Vision*, to the inward gaze, as opposed to the external or administrative glance. Julius Caesar, according to Yeats's fancy, had his silences and gazes.

I am merely listing a few of the forms taken by the literary imagination in its silent critique of the general culture. Another one is what Henry James called operative irony. In the Preface to "The Lesson of the Master," James recalls that some readers asked him where on earth his supersubtle fry, his Neil Paradays and Hugh Verekers, were to be found. Conceding the case, James nonetheless said he wasn't at all abashed:

On going over these things I see, to our critical edification, exactly why – which was because I was able to plead that my postulates, my animating presences, were all, to their great enrichment, their intensification of value, ironic; the strength of applied irony being surely in the sincerities, the lucidities, the utilities that stand behind it. When it's not a campaign, of a sort, on behalf of the something better (better than the obnoxious, the provoking object) that blessedly, as is assumed, *might* be, it's not worth speaking of. But this is exactly what we mean by operative irony. It implies and projects the possible other case, the case rich and edifying where the actuality is pretentious and vain. So it plays its lamp. . . . How can one consent to make a picture of the preponderant futilities and vulgarities and miseries of life without the impulse to exhibit as well from time to time, in its place, some fine example of the reaction, the opposition or the escape?

What one must do, according to James, is "to *create* the record, in default of any other enjoyment of it; to imagine, in a word, the honorable, the producible case." The possible other case, I assume he meant, is one not produced on the whole by the general culture: it is, perhaps, the person who most signally embodies emotions and qualities likely to be suppressed by that culture – wonder, awe, astonishment, a conviction of the sublime or the abysmal, beyond the reach of accredited knowledge.

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James is referring to citizens of the country of the blue, people who are exceptions to the general rule of muddle, hubbub, and noise. But it is also a critical purpose of literature to present ordinary people far more clearly and with more concentration of attention than they are likely to receive from the multitude. In Raymond Carver's story "Fat," the waitress who tells the story to her friend Rita and indirectly to us is imagined even more completely than the fat man who is the occasion and the theme of her story. The story she tells is about the fat man, but it's also about storytelling, about bringing new perceptions and recognitions and shadows into the world. The waitress doesn't claim to know the fat man's story but she is sure that he has one. A man who refers to himself in the royal plural – "We're not making you late, are we?" – and who thinks that in most situations "there is no choice" is likely to have a story, even though he doesn't tell it. At the end we know little more about him than these fragments, whatever we make of them, but they are enough to maintain him in his mystery, the strange radiance of it. How much more we know about the waitress is a question of interpretation: we have to decide what to make of her feeling that her life is going to change. "It is August. My life is going to change. I feel it," she says. Why she feels it, and why the feeling has been caused by her attending to the fat man, are left in shadow; but the shadow is provocative to us precisely because the general culture rarely acknowledges opacity and secrecy in its dealings with people. The culture insists upon explanations, even if they are only statistical or otherwise blunt.

So we come to what literature does: it imagines, it conjures, it summons things to come into existence for the first time, even if they resemble in certain particulars things that have existed for ages. It may tell what happened once, or what happens all the time, and if it is good it will compose "the music of what happens." Literature gives what Benedetto Croce and later Blackmur called the "theoretic form" of our experiences, and it has particular care for experiences that are diversely customary, convivial, and tragic. Some of these experiences may be archaic in relation to current axioms of cognition. Many of Seamus Heaney's poems, as cases in point, bring old experience to the condition of form and rhythm. The sequence of poems in *The Haw Lantern* called "Clearances" tells of his mother folding sheets, peeling potatoes, doing the domestic chores: the poems give these experiences their appropriate feeling, which is what they have lacked. A community might well found itself upon such poems; little stories from which a large story might be divined.

Not that literature is obliged to mime the ways of the world, the imperatives of "is" and "seems," or the privilege the general culture ascribes to facts. Even when it seems to register a fact, literature makes it appear

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differently in the particular light directed upon it. Cormac McCarthy's novel *Blood Meridian* deals with a gang of American mercenaries who, in 1849, sought out and scalped Apaches wherever they could find them. The facts and persons have been well established by participants, witnesses, and historians, but they have not been seen as McCarthy has imagined them and found speech for them. That is his great achievement. And surely literature, such as Eliot's "Ash-Wednesday" and "Animula" and "La Figlia Che Piange," is especially tender towards values for which, in the public world, it is hard to gain a hearing, all those feelings that have sought their form in religion, myth, and ritual, those subjunctives of desire, pluperfects of need.

I am emphasizing those respects in which literature stands aside from the official purposes of modern culture, including those of the liberal democratic state as commonly approved. Indeed, literature dissents from some of the most cherished programs of Western thought and questions their privilege. To be specific: literature does, as if on principle, what Emmanuel Levinas has been claiming that Western philosophy should have been doing all along but has not. According to Levinas, philosophy should be concerned not with being or knowledge but with justice. His pithiest sentence is: "Ethics precedes ontology." The primary consideration is my relation to other people, my responsibility for each of them. Levinas has often quoted, as a motto for this emphasis, the passage in *The Brothers Karamazov* in which Alyosha says: "We are all responsible for everyone else, but I am more responsible than all the others." He has also quoted a statement by the rabbi Israel Salanter: "My neighbor's material needs are my spiritual needs."

It occurs to me that literature rather than philosophy is responsive to Levinas's first philosophy of ethics. There are indeed writers who share the philosophic project of knowledge as Levinas describes and attacks it. It is a delicate matter to refer to Wallace Stevens in this context, because Stevens is such a moody poet that you can find virtually every philosophic position – except Levinas's – expressed somewhere in his poetry. He was not a philosopher, though he read a good deal of philosophy to set his mind astir. One mood of his mind seemed to him just as engaging as another. But his stance was, more often than not, idealist. In "The Man with the Blue Guitar" he writes of reducing the monster – reality – to oneself. And further:

> Poetry
> Exceeding music must take the place
> Of empty heaven and its hymns,

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> Ourselves in poetry must take their place,
> Even in the chattering of your guitar.

In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" Stevens writes:

> From this the poem springs: that we live in a place
> That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves
> And hard it is in spite of blazoned days.

But it is hard only if you take an idealist stance and find the world, on unblazoned days, difficult to appropriate or to subdue. A different situation would arise if you were to give up this sordid ambition and let the world be. Philosophic idealism is common – or perhaps under Levinas's sway I should say rampant – in modern literature, especially in one tradition of modern poetry. But the novel has, to a large extent, made up for that extravagance and provided a place for Levinas's criteria of ethics and justice. Intricacies of being and knowledge do not dominate the novel or constitute its first philosophy. It is in the novel that an attempt is made to imagine human beings not as statistical or abstract figures but as presences, living their lives in personal, social, and other terms.

Let me give an example of this imagining. In Chapter Nineteen of *The Portrait of a Lady,* Madame Merle and Isabel Archer are paying extended visits to Gardencourt, where old Mr.Touchett is dying. The women like each other and spend a lot of time willingly together, talking about subjects of mutual interest. One afternoon the subject of one's appurtenances comes up for discussion. Isabel says, rather too quickly, that she cares nothing for such things. Madame Merle answers:

> That is very crude of you. When you have lived as long as I, you will see that every human being has his shell, and that you must take the shell into account. By the shell I mean the whole envelope of circumstances. There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances. What do you call one's self? Where does it begin? Where does it end ? It overflows into everything that belongs to us – and then it flows back again. I know that a large part of myself is in the dresses I choose to wear. I have a great respect for *things*! One's self – for other people – is one's expression of one's self; and one's house, one's clothes, the books one reads, the company one keeps – these things are all expressive.

Isabel disagrees with this account:

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I think just the other way. I don't know whether I succeed in expressing myself, but I know that nothing else expresses me. Nothing that belongs to me is any measure of me; on the contrary, it's a limit, a barrier, and a perfectly arbitrary one. Certainly, the clothes which, as you say, I choose to wear, don't express me; and heaven forbid they should!

"You dress very well," Madame Merle interposes.

This little conversation is not in any strict sense philosophic, though it engages a topic common to many philosophers, the nature of the self. The discussion is at least as interesting as several polemical essays I have read on the question by philosophers, psychologists, and diverse sages over the past several years. But it is still not a formal essay in philosophy. Our interest, like James's, is not in the theme as such, the nature of the self, but in the differences between Madame Merle and Isabel on the issue. It tells us a good deal about Madame Merle that she should see the self and its envelope of circumstances as inseparable. It tells us a good deal about Isabel that she should insist upon the autonomy of the self, despite the fact that she has no evidence to support this prejudice and no experience, as yet, that would justify it. The theme is there merely to distinguish the women, one from the other, to move them a little apart so that we may see each of them more clearly. The lines of demarcation are not to be blurred. Nor is there to be a fusion of their personalities. The issue is not ontology or epistemology. The issue is difference, which in the fullness of the novel will become an ethical difference of great consequence.

I am not implying that this is the entire interest of fiction. The several forms of fiction are related to various philosophical theories, or to the subversion of them. But I am claiming that Levinas's values are more fully recognized in fiction than in philosophy: the radical acknowledgement of persons, the ethical imperative, the scruple according to which an imagined person in fiction is not allowed to become an object and reduced in that capacity by the epistemological insistence of another. Kafka's novels may be thought not to answer to this description, but they come from the far side of Levinas's values. They present individuals whose destiny it is to be denied the acknowledgment that Levinas describes and bears witness to.

The claim that fiction testifies to the indissolubility of persons might not amount to much, except that there are many forces in the general culture tending to dissolve them or otherwise reduce them. Indeed, my reference to the indissolubility of persons should not be taken to mean that personhood, even in fiction, is still accorded its proper range and

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comprehensiveness. I have implied that persons are commonly taken to begin and end as socially constructed beings – a trivial prejudice, it seems to me. If we are in every respect socially constructed, so much the worse for us. Isabel Archer would now be regarded as naive in her pretention to autonomy. And Madame Merle would be told by social scientists that she is indeed compounded of her envelope of circumstances but that she has exaggerated the extent to which she has chosen the envelope or added to its contents. She is a consumer, she would be told, and what she consumes she has been persuaded or coerced to consume. These are all social considerations. No religious, theological, or metaphysical issue is deemed to arise. Even in contemporary fiction, it is difficult to think of a character who is presented as having, in any profound or declarative sense, a religious conviction. The tradition of the Catholic novel, in which a character's religious belief and practice are deemed to matter, has evidently lost hold of general readers. It is almost a gesture of nostalgia to refer to the fiction of Georges Bernanos, François Mauriac, Graham Greene, J. F. Powers, and André Dubus, and to consider how special, in an apparently limiting sense, their values are now taken to be. I don't think Jewish fiction is in a better religious condition.

It is difficult to discuss these questions, mainly because we are in a peculiarly reductive phase of civic discourse. Many people are evidently intent on reducing mysterious capacities and forces to simple routines. And when their opponents try to speak up for the mysteries, they are rebuked as self-deluded, driving discourse beyond the reach of syntax. Those of us who teach in colleges and universities know that the reduction of "the destiny of man" to political terms has made its sinister way into the practice of reading and interpretation. It is almost impossible to ask our graduate students to consider what Eliot meant by saying that if you read literature, it is as literature that you must read it and not as something else. I am sure he meant that literature is no more reducible to politics than it is reducible to religion. But our students have been taught to believe that a reading of a novel has one aim, to diagnose the author's stance on issues of race, sex, and gender. The fact that the novel, even after the diagnosis, remains to be read as a work of art is evidently incomprehensible to them. That it was written by someone and that without the writer's lonely writing it would not exist is not supposed to count. Why did Foucault insist on referring not to authors but to "the author function," as if *Oedipus Rex* and *King Lear* could have been written by an author-function? Why has it become commonplace to talk not of souls but of selves and to reduce selves to grammatical subjects and social constructions? (We are admonished to speak of "productive codes," never of genius; as if a productive code operative at the end of the eighteenth

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century activated itself under the name of William Blake.) Why is it impossible to gain a hearing for Michel Serres's remark, "You can always proceed from the product to its conditions, but never from the conditions to the product"? Surely that's a simple idea and a true one, but if you point to Shakespeare or Aeschylus or Milton or Blake for proof, you're accused of claiming that these geniuses float free of conditions, historical, personal, political, and economical. No such claim is entailed. The only claim is that no account of the conditions, however detailed, will explain the emergence in their times and places of *King Lear* and Blake's Prophetic Books.

I'm not sure how useful it would be, in present circumstances, to contest these prejudices. Or how useful it has been when they have been contested. It is a mark of intellectuals that they find it easy not to listen and therefore not to hear. They hear only what their ideological associates are saying. Surely the conditions of conversation at large are not propitious. If you try to say that politics does not provide a comprehensive account of life, you are denounced for trying to instate the values of religion, myth, and ritual – as if that attempt were by definition insidious. If you claim that the Enlightenment has not removed mysteries, though it has solved certain problems, you are accused of wanting to spread confusion.

Suppose you merely want to say that literature is literature: you still find it hard to persuade readers who prefer to think that literature becomes a serious activity only when it is construed as something else. Even those who are well disposed to literature often think that they are doing it a favor by turning it to another purpose, apparently a better purpose than itself. Martha Nussbaum is a case in point. I have been reading her new book, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life.* Much of it is admirable, especially its emphasis upon ethical concern and "the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own." But it becomes a doomed undertaking when she argues that a reading of Dickens's *Hard Times* will persuade economists, politicians, and judges to modify their pursuit of utilitarian, cost-effective ends. *Hard Times* and *Native Son* are the only works of literature she discusses, and in both cases she presents the novel not as a work of art but as a parable, a transcript of a case study from which a workable model may be drawn. Novels should be, she says, "essential parts of an education for public rationality." But her commentary on *Native Son* ends with these sentences:

> Engaging the reader in this tragedy of social helplessness, the novel constructs a reader who is a judicious and neutral judge of Bigger Thomas, but a judge whose

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neutrality is different in kind from Wechsler's and far closer to Whitman's – though constrained, as Whitman's is not, by the specific institutional requirements of the judicial role. The stigma of racial hate and shame emerges as fundamentally deforming of human personality and community, and the novel-reading stance calls out for political and social equality as the necessary condition of full humanity for citizens on both sides of "the line."

These notions arise from an inadequate reading of Richard Wright's novel. Nussbaum takes Bigger Thomas as a representative of his social group, but he is not. He is exceptional to his group, in that he deals with his helplessness by murdering one woman and burning her body in a furnace, and by raping and murdering a second woman. The case Nussbaum makes for Bigger Thomas is not nearly as persuasive as the one made in the novel by his lawyer, Mr. Max, in terms of black history and deprivation. But in any event, Nussbaum's advocacy is based upon a simplistic analysis. It is as if her engagement with the novel ended when she had extracted a banal moral from the story. I hope that judges will read Wright's book more carefully. But even if Nussbaum had read it more carefully – more critically – her use of it to modify the prejudices of politicians and judges would still have been pointless. Nothing but confusion arises from a reading of *Native Son* as an explanation of a representative case of rape and murder. A reading of Wordsworth's poems evidently had a certain effect on John Stuart Mill, helping to release his otherwise congealed feelings. But *Native Son* is a mere cartoon, a bizarre fantasy: as evidence, it is no more reliable as a picture of deprived blacks than *Boyz 'n the Hood.*

I will stop short of claiming to know, in a particular case, what relations a novel bears – or might bear – to the general culture. But it is only by its being first recognized as a work of art that it is ready to establish any genuine relation to this culture. On the last page of *Native Son* we read this: " 'I didn't want to kill!' Bigger shouted. 'But what I killed for, I *am!* It must've been pretty deep in me to make me kill!' " Clearly this is not Bigger Thomas thinking, but Richard Wright thinking and speaking for him. There is much to be said about the statement, the claim, the self-justifying cry. But the first consideration is the statement in its structural force within the novel. There is no merit in confounding one discipline – literary criticism – with the methods of another – social science, criminology, or whatever.

Indeed, I am impelled to recall a sentence from Malraux which I haven't made a point of noting. Speaking of the masterpieces of art, he says that their common message is that of their existence. That sentence refers to the artist's motive, his "motive for metaphor," but it is salutary, too, in

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keeping our minds concentrated on the existence of a work of art. Before we think of using a work of art for some extraneous purpose, we should contemplate it in itself, in its being that work and no other.

Hilton Kramer: Responding to Professor Donoghue's paper will be Donald Kagan, the Hillhouse Professor of History and Classics at Yale University, author of many distinguished works of historical scholarship, most recently a book on the origins of war and the preservation of peace. Professor Kagan is currently a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Institute in Washington, and he is a member of the Board of Trustees of Adelphi University.

Donald Kagan: We must all be grateful to Mr. Donoghue for eloquently reminding us of the special, autonomous place of art, and especially of literature, apart from politics and sociology, even from philosophy. Its power comes from its ability to choose its own subject, style and purpose. Literature that is shaped merely by its author's time and his place within his society, by *their* prejudices and purposes, is a poor and weak thing that deserves the social scientific analysis and pseudo-philosophical mumbo-jumbo that pass for literary criticism in our day.

But true literary artists are not bound by such things. They see through and beyond the prejudices and passions of their own time and place and are bound only by the limits that bind all human beings at all times in all places: the reality of nature and of human nature. There is a natural world outside of human will and desire; man's genius can manipulate it to a considerable extent, and the results can be wonderful, but they are inevitably constrained by the enormous power and mystery of nature and by the limits imposed by man's own nature. Mr. Donoghue's stimulating remarks bring to mind the tragic poet Sophocles and especially his drama *Antigone*. There his chorus describes the dilemma:

> 0 wondrous sublety of man, that draws
> To good or evil ways! Great honour is given
> And power to him who upholdeth his country's laws
> And the justice of heaven
> But he that, too rashly daring, walks in sin
> In solitary pride to his life's end.
> At door of mine shall never enter in
> To call me friend.

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Man's ingenuity and power are great, but both his power and life are limited. Such is the basis for the Greeks' tragic view of life. There is no excuse for passivity, for human beings can help shape the environments that shape *them* and they have the opportunity and the power to defy their societies and their unjust laws, as Antigone does in defying Creon. He has overridden the unwritten divine law by forbidding the burial of her brother, killed in a rebellion against his state. She chooses to bury her brother and accept a horrible death as the penalty, and we marvel and admire her for it.

So far, it is possible to think of Sophocles as the kind of artist described in Mr. Donoghue's quotation from Malraux – the champion of revolt against man's fate, so often in our time taken to be the revolt against society and its ways. True artists, like Sophocles, however, are not propagandists but pursuers of deep, usually complicated, understandings of the human condition. Sophocles's play reveals such complexity. There is something to be said for Creon. His decree is meant to preserve the security of the state and society, the minimal requirement of civilization, the thin veneer that protects us from the plunge into barbarism and savagery. Modern artists tend to assume that the established order is always wrong. Ibsen's Dr. Stockman in *An Enemy of the People* made it clear that the rule applies even to democratic establishments with his passionate assertion that "the majority is always wrong."

But the greatest artists are prepared to search for the truth of the human condition wherever the trail may lead. They do not prejudge the outcome. The establishment or the defiant rebel may be right or, as is typical of real tragedy, each may by right in his own way, even as the two rights clash disastrously. Sophocles' portrayal of the struggle is so even-handed that some ancient scholars thought that Creon's case is the stronger and that the play should be called *Creon*, not *Antigone*. That must be wrong, for Antigone alone displays the willful, defiant, single-minded, unrelenting, uncalculating determination to do what she must, regardless of consequences, that is characteristic of Sophoclean heroes. But the point is that Sophocles wrestles with the issues and depicts their champions with such honesty as to do justice to the depth, difficulty and universality of the subject and his characters.

Such an artist does not reflexively take the side of any rebel against the established order. It may be that the establishment is right. More likely, there is a degree of right on both sides, so that the difficult task for human beings is to gain a deeper understanding of what is at stake, both for individual and society, to understand that the needs of individual and society are both competitive *and* complementary and to contemplate the resulting dilemma with the seriousness and awe it deserves. In *Antigone,*

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Sophocles seems to be concerned, in the first place, with the temptation that power can place in the way of a political leader like Creon to do whatever is necessary, even to violate divine law, in the interest of the state. That would be a comfortable position for a writer in our times. But Sophocles, no less, understands the enormous cost when an individual tramples on human law even in defense of the most fundamental human needs. The resulting clash leaves us neither with a burning determination to overthrow the regime nor one to suppress all insurgency. It leaves us emotionally stimulated and then drained, and it leaves our minds alerted and sobered. We have become deeper individuals and wiser citizens.

Malraux says, "All art is a revolt against man's fate." If he is right, Sophocles' plays, the other tragedies, and much of ancient Greek literature are not art. Malraux's view, it seems to me, reflects not so much the Enlightenment but the Romantic movement that is determined to see the artist as an individual apart from, superior to, and in rebellion against the established order. Sophocles, like Aeschylus and Thucydides, was very much a part of his society. He fought its battles as a soldier, he understood and appreciated its necessity and excellences even as he probed its dilemmas and weaknesses. His plays, among other things, helped their audiences to understand and come to terms with man's fate. It is man's fate, part of the tragic human condition, to revolt and struggle against its negative elements. But human excellence, virtue, even survival, depend on the establishment of a decent social order and its defense even against the most passionate and sincere rebels who would smash it in search of some imagined perfection beyond human grasp.

Because he was part of the society in which he lived and understood its needs and virtues, Sophocles could compel his fellow citizens honestly to confront its conflicts and its deepest contradictions. They did not suppress, scorn, or, what is worse, ignore him. Instead, they honored him with prizes, election to the highest military and political office, and with deep and abiding reverence. Would that all this were possible for modern artists and their audiences in the world today.

Robert Hass: The Enlightenment, which everyone here has praised so highly, began, first of all, as a rationalist critique on privilege and on the failure of the privileged to imagine anything but their own prerogatives. It was also an imaginative leap to another, more democratic imagination of human society. I would say that in this way, feminism, multiculturalism, and deconstruction have been accusing the Western tradition of blindness, and I'm afraid to a certain extent we've been acting out that blindness here. What powerful literature can do is enact the reality so that reason can free us from it. When Professor Himmelfarb was asked what

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the solution was, she suggested that a revival of the religious imagination, the social and ethical imagination, was called for. When she was asked how that should be brought about, her first reply was, we need to legislate morality, and she used civil rights legislation as an example. Her second reply was, we need to get government out of people's lives. It seems contradictory, but it's not, because she was talking about getting government into the lives of the poor and getting government out of the lives of the rich. It's another example of this failure of rationality, where what's required is imagination.

It seems to me that the great thing about the art of the Enlightenment and the period just after it, to which my deepest aesthetic attachments are, to Blake and Wordsworth, to Pushkin and Stendhal, and to Jane Austen, was a wonderful mix of rationality with this new imagination of the other. It did what Malraux also said art does. It pays attention not to the large social construction but to the privacy and the individuality of all human suffering. Out of that artists make images. Out of those images reason can operate on and make the discriminations that might give us a society of shared values. So the art I would call up out of this conference is that art. It can be summarized in a couple of lines from American poets. One of those is Walt Whitman's "I was a man, I was there. I suffered." A greater and more complex one might be Emily Dickinson's, and I'll end with her poem, "Theres a Certain Slant of Light":

There's a certain slant of light
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.

Heavenly hurt it gives us;
We can find no scar,
But internal difference
Where the meanings are.

None may teach it anything,
'Tis the seal, despair, –
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air.

When it comes, the landscape listens,
Shadows hold their breath;
When it goes, 'tis like the distance
On the look of death.

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Hilton Kramer: Thank you. Mr. Milosz.

Czeslaw Milosz: I listened attentively Mr. Donoghue's excellent remarks, and I would like not to express disagreement but to embroider, to say something about my experience as a poet in this century. The fact is that those who mind their own business rather than the world's, as Mr. Donoghue says, and who try to live in the country of the blue, beyond the reach of accredited knowledge, have great difficulty in this century. They are under constant social and ethical pressures. They are asked to justify their existence by dealing with serious problems and not practicing their art. The Enlightenment was a secular translation of the theology of redemption to the worldly realm. In this respect, I believe the work of artists who are forced to serve criminal utopias reflects the same ethical and social pressures faced by those who oppose such criminal ideas. I can say this as the author of anti-Nazi poems. I believe that as a poet I acted under the same pressures of the ethical and the social as those who were serving criminal states.

I must invoke here a poet, the late Joseph Brodsky, who was my friend. He was not concerned with the social and the ethical. Paradoxically, he developed his art under the ultimate social and ethical pressure, that of the Soviet state, but he was free, and he moved in his own realm. Why? Because he served the elemental force of the Russian language. It is not so simple for an artist to remain in his own realm because if he behaves like that, he is sentenced to write linguistics, not poetry. Brodsky was an exception to the case. Poetry and literature in general are connected with reality but in extremely complex ways.

I should add here something which hasn't been mentioned: memory. We have no other means of knowing about phases of our civilization, of our time, of the nineteenth century, for instance, than through literature. Literature fixes those certain phases. The function of poetry and of fiction's memory is very important. Unfortunately, if we look at this century, an extremely small part of human experience has been fixed in language and literature. We may wonder how small a percentage of what mankind has lived remains in the language. The reasons are not only in the reluctance or indifference of writers and poets, but in the very fact of form. Form cannot be first if you want to reach high artistic levels, since you are then bound by form, and that form is very often a betrayal of reality. It cannot grasp reality.

Joseph Brodsky wrote in one of his essays one of the most penetrating passages on the creative process in general, about Anna Akhmatova's poem, "Requiem." She wrote it when her son was imprisoned. She

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stood before the gate of the prison with a package to deliver to him. Her poem is about all the mothers standing before the gates of the prisons. Brodsky says that Akhmatova had enormous difficulty and pain writing that poem, because her feeling was real and authentic, but when putting it into form, she felt that she betrayed the authenticity of her feeling, because form imposed its own exigencies. This is precisely the conflict between form and content and human experience. It is, in my opinion, extremely important and it explains why so little of the experience of our century has been fixed, retained in our language.

As I said, we have lived through the secular translation of the order of redemption and now are living in a century of social utopias and search for solutions, for social and secular redemption. Sometime ago I visited the Vatican Museum of Modern Art. There are very few paintings there that have overtly religious subjects, but their effect proves a very deep link between art and religion. They can speak in a roundabout way in approaching religious subjects. I consider that true Christian books in this century were written by writers who do not in their novels confess their Christianity directly. The books of Tolkein and C. S. Lewis, for instance, are concerned with good and evil but not in any confessional sense.

So in response to Denis Donoghue's excellent observations, I want to draw attention to that very profound conflict for the artist between his own realm and the social-ethical realm.

Elizabeth Spires: Denis Donoghue has spoken of literature turning aside from the world rather than annotating it. I would tend to agree, although I might include the idea of literature penetrating and illuminating life from within. I don't see literature as being able to change or improve the social order. As Auden said once, poetry makes nothing happen. And yet, playing against this is an intangible effect that it has on us which is very hard to describe. I would like to read a very short passage from Yeats to illustrate this:

> I was writing once a very symbolical and abstract poem, when my pen fell to the ground; and as I stooped to pick it up, I remembered some fantastic adventure that yet did not seem fantastic, and then another like adventure, and when I asked myself when these things had happened, I found that I was remembering my dreams for many nights. I tried to remember what I had done the day before, and then what I had done that morning; but all my waking life had perished from me, and it was only after a struggle that I came to remember it again, and as I did so, that more powerful and startling life perished in its turn. Had my pen not fallen on the ground and so made me turn from the images I was weaving into verse, I would never have known that meditation had become trance, for I

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would have been like one who does not know he is passing through a wood because his eyes are on the pathway. So I think that in the making and the understanding of a work of art, and the more easily if it is full of patterns and symbols and music, we are lured to the threshold of sleep, and it may be far beyond it, without knowing that we have ever set our feet upon the steps of horn or of ivory.

I would say that the experience of both writing or reading poetry is akin in many ways to remembering your dreams for many nights. If you've been deprived of your dreams, useless as they often seem, a whole dimension has been removed.

Hilton Kramer: Denis Donoghue will respond, and then we'll take several questions from the audience.

Denis Donoghue: I would like to clarify what I might have inadequately suggested. Many years ago, the critic Allen Tate wrote an essay called "To What Is the Poet Responsible?" Tate wrote at a time when poets were urged to be acutely socially conscious, to be responsive to, shall we say, reality in its immediate, pressing, worldly sense. Yet at the end of the essay, Tate concluded that fundamentally and finally the poet is responsible to his language. And language is the source of the provenance or provocation of responsibility. Not ideas, not ideologies, not political programs. That of course, is what Czeslaw Milosz has been saying. And on that emphasis I entirely agree. The question of form is, of course, a profoundly crucial one, since form does not mean merely the counting of syllables or the counting to fourteen if you're reading a sonnet. It's a far more profound issue, as indeed Mr. Milosz also implied. The second point I will try to make by way of a quotation. Seamus Heaney was kind enough to send me a copy of his recent Nobel Prize acceptance speech. There are many very beautiful things in it, but one phrase caught my attention and stayed in my mind, where he spoke of "the sufficiency of what is absolutely imagined." That struck me as a very telling and far-reaching phrase. We might question whether anything can be "absolutely imagined." But we would surely not want to question the sufficiency of what is indeed profoundly and intensely imagined. That is an emphasis that I would certainly wish to have made.

I finally would like to add that of course literature is related to other activities, perhaps related to every other conceivable and nameable activity. But if we are to avoid the spuriousness of such relations, literature has to be acknowledged as literature, to begin with. Then it can be shown to have bearings, reverberations, and relations with virtually anything else

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we can think of. But it seems to me that spuriousness arises only if we prematurely constrain literature by subjecting it to other considerations. Relations are a different matter.

Audience: Professor Donoghue, was not the theory of art for art's sake formulated originally as an approach to social problems, political problems, through the means of art?

And to Mr. Milosz, was the late Joseph Brodsky constrained by the directly political support which was shown to him throughout his career, and which contributed to his international reputation?

Denis Donoghue: My understanding of the theory or the practice of art for art's sake in the nineteenth century is that it was designed to exert pressure against an otherwise oppressive reality. There is a useful phrase that Wallace Stevens uses in several of his essays, where he speaks about the violence without, which is the violence of reality pressing upon the artist as indeed upon the citizen. But he also speaks about the imagination as the violence within. Ideally, he thinks that the potency of art is, in fact, a function of this double pressure. But he certainly emphasized the pressure of imagination against an otherwise oppressive reality. When T. S. Eliot wrote his comment on art for art's sake, he was to some extent deflecting a certain blow. He was saying that the value of art for art's sake, as truly understood, is art as practiced by a Flaubert or Henry James, who minds his own business, gets on with his art, is concerned with the possibilities of his linguistic medium, of the genre, of the history of literature, of language, and is concerned to work in that fashion.

Czeslaw Milosz: I do not believe that the kind of support Joseph Brodsky found in this country was political in nature, nor is the fact that he was offered a university teaching position due to any kind of political support. His position was not a sinecure, and he was a very conscientious teacher. He was completely independent.

Hilton Kramer: I think I can add a footnote to this response. In 1964, when I was working as an editor at *The New Leader,* which was a famously liberal anti-Communist magazine, we published I believe the first English translation of a poem by Joseph Brodsky, the elegy to John Donne, translated by the late poet Eugene Garrigue. It was certainly not the custom for *The New Leader* to publish poems, and this poem would not have been published at that time in the Soviet Union, while Brodsky was still suffering immense difficulties there. *The New Leader* published it as a gesture of political support, for his protection. I don't think there is

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any question in the minds of many of us who have followed Brodsky's career, that he could not conceivably have enjoyed the kind of support and acclaim among non-Russian readers of poetry, if there had not been a political aspect, a sense of political rescue involved in the kind of acclaim he received. Nor do I believe would the Nobel judges have conferred their prize on him if he had emerged in non-political circumstances.

Audience: If you liken the situation today to a dark tunnel with low light, with the assault against Western tradition, reason, multicultural history and political correctness, where do you think we are? At the beginning of a tunnel, inside it, or are we emerging from it?

Hilton Kramer: My own view is that we are still in the dark.

Denis Donoghue: I often quote a wonderful passage from Gerard Manley Hopkins's early journals, where he recalls that as a child he constantly asked himself, what must it must be like to be different. Now it seems to me that what our culture, if our culture can be spoken of in these terms at all, is very much concerned with what it must be like to be the same. And I'm far more concerned with what it must be to be different, and what the word "difference" mean. sI don't think the matter can be resolved simply by appealing to a rather facile notion of multiculturalism. I think there's infinitely more to it than anything like that.

Igor Webb: Rousseau writes about how it would be impossible to present Sophocles to a contemporary French audience, because they have nothing in common. He was arguing that Molière and Corneille were passé, and that what was needed was a kind of extension of Woodstock festivals, which would be appropriate for a Republic. So perhaps actually the creation of a vast audience and of a Republic immediately raises the question of the kinds of capacities that it is going to produce.

Denis Donoghue: Of course, I don't agree with this, in one respect. I've been arguing a little with J. Hillis Miller. He has an essay in which he says in effect, that it is outrageous for the University of California system to expect that, shall we say, impoverished Mexican immigrants read *Hamlet,* etc. This seems tò be a ludicrous argument. Let's assume for a moment that the students are undergraduates. It seems to me that if such an immigrant were assigned to read German, he or she would not only expect to read and be coached in the mysteries of reading Schiller and Goethe, and so on, but would feel distinctively cheated if he were not led through the mysteries of doing so.

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Robert Hass: I teach those Mexican students. And not only are they interested in Shakespeare and Goethe, the classes are always overenrolled. They are hungry to learn. If there is anything different about this generation of students, Afro-American, Hispanic, or Asian-American, it is that they are pouring into literature and philosophy. They're anxious to claim a heritage. It is quite ironic in terms of the most unimaginative forms of multiculturalism, which requires them to remain stuck in one part of their identity..

I would like to turn back to this issue of the future of literacy and the kind of instrumentalities that are going to be created by it, and therefore the kind of reader and citizen and human beings we're going to get. I think that if you actually look at some of the work being done on CD/ROM and their possibility, it makes clear two things. Whatever the commercial uses these media are going to be put to, the artistic uses will be interesting, and artists haven't even begun to explore those possiblities.

The other crucial thing will be an enormous amount of commercial exploitation of the most boring kind. The really innovative ways of thinking, of presenting knowledge, and creating the kind of readers who are responding to it and being formed by it, will happen in the academies, in the new textbooks, in the new kinds of essays that are going to be written, the new novels and poetry. It's going to require and indeed stimulate a greater literacy.

Elizabeth Spires: Are you saying that you envision poetry and fiction becoming interactive? I don't see how CD/ROM is going to actually affect the writing or reading of a poem.

Robert Hass: I think that it will happen, that new forms will emerge. For example, you will be able to read the poem and also will be able to call up the voice or the image or both of the poet reading, if that's of interest. You'll also be able to call up interviews with writers. In the hands of imaginative teachers, these new technologies are going to be used outside the market place. The inventive aspects of learning and teaching are going to become more crucial in the next century.

Denis Donoghue: I find myself in some disagreement with Mr. Hass on this point. I recently saw a CD/ROM of Joyce's *Ulysses,* produced by Professor John Kidd at Boston University. What you get, from the first page on, is Joyce's text. You also get Joyce's tower just outside Dublin, a picture of Dublin Bay, the landscape sweeping right out to it, you get voices including the mind's voices. You also get all of the available anno-

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tations of *Ulysses*. But you do not get the particular critical capacity acquired from reading the words on the page. That remains as it were the great unknown, the great darkness. So it seems to me we should not equate the ability to read with receptivity to a vast bulk of information. There has never been a lack of information, but the capacity to read, in the sense that we speak of reading in the context of literary criticism, still seems to me to remain. Nobody is teaching that.

Robert Hass: But if people get all this information about *Ulysses*, couldn't it give them the impetus or curiousity to go back and read it, and get a lot more out of it?

Denis Donoghue: I think it might have precisely the opposite effect, in the sense that it will give them the feeling that they know it all already.

Elizabeth Spires: I think you could argue that the CD/ROM you're describing is actually a limit on the imagination, in the sense that when you read you create these pictures as well as trying to understand what's going on in the story. But if you're given all the pictures, "the right answers," the photos, it could be quite distracting.

Robert Hass: I don't disagree with either of you. The temptation to add so much information that this thing becomes identical to reality in its meaninglessness only means it's going to require of us the invention of a newly nuanced vocabulary to think well and create engaged readers in this media. I'm sure that there are going to be a lot of false steps, that we're going to get a lot of bad performance poetry, for example. But I think we're also going to have to find ways to use that instrument to cultivate in people the values we care about. That will continue to happen in the kind of give-and-take that goes on in real teaching in a classroom.

Igor Webb: Thank you.

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ROGER SHATTUCK

Guilt, Justice, and Empathy in Melville and Camus

In their very different narrative voices, Melville's *Billy Budd* and Camus's *The Stranger* both offer us information that impedes our interpretation of the action. We come to know too much about the characters to be at ease with the working out of justice under highly strained circumstances. As a result, these two short novels have provoked lengthy disputes. Melville and Camus oblige us to face a troubling question: Can knowledge get in the way of justice?

The great territorial and commercial expansion of the new American republic did not lift Melville's career as writer. After a successful start as the author of nautical adventure novels, he responded to the failure of *Moby-Dick* by appearing to retire into his New York customs house job. But the analogies of the ship of state and the ship of individual character would not leave him. When he died in 1891 Melville had nearly finished in manuscript the short historical novel, *Billy Budd, Sailor.*

Many years passed before the publication of this enigmatic narrative, partially based on a mutiny in 1842 aboard the U.S. Navy brig, *Somers.* Melville's much admired cousin, Guert Gansevoort, was First Lieutenant on the *Somers* at the time. Melville himself was twenty-three, whaling and jumping ship in the Pacific. Forty years later in the 1880s, the *Somers* affair was still being written about when Melville began work on a related poem, "Billy in the Darbies." What we read as a consecutive novel is essentially the extended, hypertrophied headnote for that poem. Its thirty-two lines of rough but not free verse maintain their place at the end of a slow-starting story that climaxes in thirty pages of intense action.

As in *Moby-Dick,* layers of nautical detail establish a foreground of convincing realism. Recurrent Biblical allusions to Adam, Satan, Abraham, and Joseph engage the narrative in allegory at critical moments. Melville has summoned to his side the Biblical transition of forbidden knowledge. Two key passages reveal how steadily the tale moves from realism toward allegory. The first comes at the close of a long characterization of Claggart:

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Now something such an one was Claggart, in whom was the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short "a depravity according to nature."

Dark sayings are these, some will say. But why? Is it because they somewhat savor of Holy Writ in its phrase "mystery of iniquity"? If they do, such savor was far enough from being intended, for little will it commend these passages to many a reader of today.

The tentative phrasing of the two paragraphs only underlines their portentousness. The phrase "mystery of iniquity" (2 Thess. 2:7) designates the problem of the existence of evil in a God-created world, the problem addressed by Leibnitz with the modern term "theodicy," Milton's avowed subject in *Paradise Lost*. What absorbs Melville is how Claggart's evil infects the innocent Billy through an obscure causation we call fate.

The second key passage presents that infection or moral reversal as tragic and inevitable. It takes an attentive reading to follow the paradoxes and reversals described in these sentences:

In the jugglery of circumstances preceding and attending the event on board the *Bellipotent,* and in the light of that martial code whereby it was formally to be judged, innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places. In a legal view the apparent victim of the tragedy was he who had sought to victimize a man blameless; and the indisputable deed of the latter, navally regarded, constituted the most heinous of military crimes. Yet more. The essential right and wrong involved in the matter, the clearer that might be, so much the worse for the responsibility of a loyal commander, inasmuch as he was not authorized to determine the matter on that primitive basis.

Notice that all three characters are arrayed together in this tense passage. It tempts us to make a double allegorical leap. The *Bellipotent* is a ship of war that represents not only a ship of state in crisis but also the ship of a divided and unified individual: Claggart as evil, Billy as good or innocence, Captain Vere as the authority of reason trying to maintain order. The tragedy is not lowly Billy's but Vere's; the captain dies years later muttering Billy's name. As wartime commander he is duty bound to judge the killing according to the forms of naval justice. The principle is not new to him. "'For mankind,' he would say, 'forms, measured forms, are everything.'" Tocqueville uses the same term, "forms," to designate the traditions and customs he finds lacking in an open democratic society. The forms of naval justice are barely adequate to deal with the mystery of

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iniquity, with the instantaneous blow which transforms Billy into a murderer and Claggart into a half-innocent victim.

The end of the tale offers us two contradictory versions of the events. In the official naval records, ordinary seaman Billy Budd becomes a knife-wielding alien and Petty Officer Claggart a discreet, respectable gentleman. In the popular ballad, "Billy in the Darbies," that is, the poem that generated the whole story in Melville's imagination, the sailor in irons dreams of his death as a form of sleep. These versions correspond loosely to the two critical interpretations the novel has inspired, Melville's Quarrel with God or Melville's Testament of Acceptance. It is essential to point out that the novel does *not* say: choose one interpretation or the other. Even Captain Vere, whom it is easy to see as an inflexible, unsympathetic martinet, knows that the situation is more complex than his official conduct can acknowledge. This father figure partially represents Melville trying to come to terms with the loss of his own two sons, one to suicide, one to sickness. More profoundly, Vere represents the attempt of an upright and intelligent man to come to terms with the intellectual currents of the nineteenth century: irreligion, science, evolution, democracy. The circumstances of Billy's court martial tax Vere to the limit. Because Vere accepts full responsibility for his ship, his dilemmas carry the themes of forbidden knowledge a step further than in *Paradise Lost* and *Faust*. Vere has no God figure to help him.

Billy Budd's probing of unexpressed states of mind may well be what Melville wished to designate with the startling subtitle he pencilled into the margin of the manuscript: "An Inside Narrative." It doesn't refer to any form of narrative omniscience in a tale where many crucial events remain unknown even to the faceless narrator. For us, in the present discussion, the subtitle looks forward to another novel written fifty years later.

A Frenchman born and brought up poor and fatherless in Algeria, Albert Camus worked there as a journalist and dramatist before becoming a major Resistance figure in continental France during World War II. His most haunting work, a short novel called *The Stranger*, published in 1942, was immediately singled out as a major exhibit of Existentialism. The philosophical and literary movement which swept Europe for two decades after the war enshrined Camus as a major hero opposite Sartre, with whom he broke in 1952 over the latter's Soviet loyalties. Camus received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1957 and died in 1960.

The Stranger has remained an astonishingly timely book for the last half of the twentieth century. Its popularity reached a peak in the 1960s and contributed to the formation of the cool, hip, detached hero or anti-

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hero of that decade. There were a few copycat crimes on beaches in California and elsewhere. The book's idealized affectlessness costumed itself in terms like "the absurd," "authenticity," and "sincerity." As the century closes, *The Stranger* is still widely read and equally widely *mis*read. I link that serious misreading to an aspect of forbidden knowledge and will compare it to the closely related action of *Billy Budd*.

Melville's subtitle "An Inside Narrative" fits Camus's *The Stranger* like a glove. The first half of Camus's tale confines the reader inside a single intermittently vivid yet numbing sensibility. One diffident character tells us his own story. Then during the interrogation and trial scenes forming the second half, everything happens all over again in retrospect according to a terse principle Camus affirmed at the same period in *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "To create is to live twice."

Anyone who has read this troubling modern classic probably remembers the pervading moral deadness of Meursault's life and character punctuated by moments of intense physical immediacy. It helps very little to attach the labels "absurd" and "alienated" to his existence. One perceptive commentator has noticed how closely Meursault's behavior parallels the automatism that Bergson in his essay, *Laughter,* identifies as the source of humor. In an interview Camus mentioned "humor" as the theme most neglected in his work. A more likely reference or even source for Meursault's obtuse sensuousness comes from an observation by Nietzsche, a philosopher whose work Camus was reading in 1938-39 while working on *The Stranger.*

> An animal lives unhistorically, for it is entirely absorbed in the present . . . It does not know how to dissemble or pretend. The animal appears at every moment exactly what it is. It cannot be other than honest and sincere. *(Thoughts Out of Season)*

Nietzsche's description of animal consciousness follows close behind Rousseau's Second *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*: "I almost dare to affirm that the state of reflection is a state contrary to nature and that the man who meditates is a depraved animal." Camus catches the mood of Meursault's stunted mind in great part through a muted style tending toward dysfunction and parataxis. Nothing connects. Things just happen. In a famous commentary, Sartre calls our attention to the indolence and indifference of this mute writing. Camus carries his flat chopped-off style a step further than Kafka and Hemingway. It conveys the metaphysical drift of our age as acutely as the montage principle in cinema and in painting.

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The Stranger offers us the inside narrative of virtually empty mental states verging on autism.

Yet Camus depicts Meursault's animal consciousness being pushed little by little toward self-awareness. The process begins after his mother's burial, after Marie spends Saturday night with him, at the end of the long idle Sunday that follows:

I'd intended to smoke another cigarette at my window, but the night had turned rather chilly and I decided against it. As I was coming back after shutting the window, I glanced at the mirror and saw reflected in it a corner of my table with my spirit lamp and some bits of bread beside it. It occurred to me that somehow I'd got through another Sunday, that Mother now was buried, and that tomorrow I'd be going back to work as usual. Really, nothing in my life had changed.

Meursault does not yet see *himself* in the mirror. He glimpses only a few fragments of his environment. He seems to register for a moment the utter vacancy of his life. A variety of scenes builds on this one. Meursault vaguely senses that the robot-like woman in the restaurant, who scrupulously writes out her own check with tip, embodies a caricature of himself. In prison he studies the reflection of his face in the tin mess kit and realizes that he has been talking to himself. In the courtroom a young journalist gazes so hard at Meursault that Meursault has the impression of "being scrutinized by myself." Later, while Meursault awaits execution, the prison chaplain visits him and gazes at him constantly during a lengthy and antagonistic conversation. Finally the chaplain's insistent words, "I'm on your side. I'll pray for you," provoke Meursault into seizing the chaplain. "Nothing is important," he shouts at him. "Life is absurd." Meursault has glimpsed in the succession of reflections something that inspires defiance in him, followed by "tender indifference" when he is alone again. This sudden surge and fall of feeling occurs in the last three pages of the novel. One could read the final sentence of *The Stranger* as an ironic version of the execution scene at the end of *Billy Budd* (Billy shouts "God bless Captain Vere!"), even as a parody of that scene:

In order to consummate everything and to feel less alone, I had only to wish that there would be a large crowd of spectators the day of my execution and that they would greet me with shouts of hatred.

But Camus didn't read *Billy Budd* until after he had written *The Stranger*. Later in an essay written for an encyclopedia, he praised

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Melville's novel and wondered whether Billy's death represents a protest against a blasphemous violation of human justice, or a resigned assent to the terrible order of Providence. Those are the two standard interpretations already mentioned. We have seen Providence before in story after story; it is one of the guises of forbidden knowledge. It is surprising that Camus did not refer to the arresting similarity between *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger.* They are like two mineral specimens, different in color and texture, yet whose crystalline structures resemble one another. The two narratives turn on essentially the same situation. From one point of view a violent, lethal deed, not of passion or premeditation but of impulse, is described from inside as an innocent act. From an opposed point of view a rigid system of justice finds the same deed to be criminal enough to merit the death penalty. Neither man defends himself against the charges. Neither man feels remorse or moral anguish even though each accepts his guilt. It is, I believe, this sustained moral ambivalence that makes it difficult to deal adequately with these two books.

As Camus points out in his essay on Melville, *Billy Budd* presents its moral dilemma with the starkness of a classic tragedy. Confronted by the two nearly stereotypic figures of good and evil in Billy and Claggart, Captain Vere presents to his fellow officers sitting in judgment a case against Billy that he supports with the responsibilities of his rank. Order must be maintained, even in the face of his own inclinations to favor Handsome Billy. In *The Stranger,* the place of Captain Vere is occupied not by any corresponding character, not by the three judges and the jury, but by the reader. It is a vast difference. The reader must decide between Meursault's seemingly candid inside account of how the awful events somehow produced themselves through no fault of his, and the prosecutor's wandering and sometimes odiously righteous account of Meursault's criminal behavior. Still, the prosecutor shows Meursault to be unwilling to face the consequences of his acts and bereft of moral awareness. The jury remains remote; its decision barely concerns us as we contemplate the original events and the trial and make up our own mind about them.

Writing about *Billy Budd* in *Beyond Culture,* Lionel Trilling felt the need to report that most of his hundreds of students over the years condemned Captain Vere for condemning Billy Budd. After teaching *The Stranger* off and on for thirty years I must report a similar response among students to Meursault and to the guilty verdict pronounced against him. At first I partly agreed with the students. Later, after shifting my position, I began keeping track of their reactions. In 1975, on the midterm examination of an undergraduate French course, I asked whether the prosecutor was justified in calling Meursault's behavior "monstrous."

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Though written in rudimentary French, many of the students' answers seem remarkably eloquent:

Meursault was wrong to kill the Arab. But he didn't mean to. The death was almost an accident. He's not a criminal. He's only a man in a bad situation.

I think that the real monster, the person who cannot control his emotions, is more the prosecutor than Meursault.

One must understand Meursault in order to realize that his actions were not his choice but simply what happened.

Eighteen students out of twenty-two sympathized with Meursault, called for "understanding" his situation, and defended his behavior as primarily "different."

In 1990, in a graduate-undergraduate comparative literature course, I asked for a synopsis of *The Stranger* and a brief commentary on the action. Many of the students' responses tapped reserves of genuine passion:

Meursault is sentenced to be decapitated more for the person he is than for the crime he has committed.

Meursault sees objectively and impersonally . . . and learns to live as Job did, without judging life by human standards, [and thus] transcending anthropomorphism.

Reading Camus' *The Stranger* is a bit like witnessing a swimmer struggling against an overpowering current. The swimmer, who maintains no pretenses and clings to no false hopes, is challenged head-on by a society that prides itself on "meaningful" conventions and order. . . . Just as the Stranger yanks away the security blankets civilization tenaciously clings to, so does he [Camus] jolt the reader to a new level of consciousness.

[The novel presents] the French judicial system's inability to cope with Meursault, whose honesty leads him to be sentenced to death.

The tragic protagonist, Meursault, stoically narrates his existence misunderstood by a judgmental French society.

These comments, all of which deserve careful attention, testify to a misreading leading to moral blindness. In most of them the basic fact of the murder is discounted, not mentioned, virtually overlooked. They as-

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sume that Meursault has told his story honestly and sincerely. What more can we want? The second group of students had read *Billy Budd* earlier and had discussed the tragic necessity of Captain Vere's drumhead court and its verdict. (Many questioned, very properly, the need for summary execution.) Now, when asked to assume the role of Captain Vere in facing a comparable situation, many of them capitulated to the subtle, undemonstrative voice of Meursault narrating his own tale. Camus created a cool, flat, artificially natural style for most of the episodes. Set against that monotonous landscape, the semi-ritualistic killing on the beach releases in Meursault a glorious burst of lyric intensity. The murder scene combines the crescendos of a gratuitous act and an epiphany. The seizure of that moment apparently makes Meursault lose consciousness and suffer memory loss. His later attitudes and behavior remain mysterious because we are never given a full account of what happened right after the murder and of how he was apprehended.

Camus's narrative has the power of magic incantation in modern dress. It makes one forget that Meursault never thinks of or refers to the human being he has killed. He experiences no regret, no remorse. To the examining magistrate Meursault identifies his feelings about the deed as *ennui*. On the last page of the novel, by saying "I felt ready to live it all over again," he appears to reaffirm his crime and his punishment as the only source of his identity, as his signature. Is this laconic murderer our modern Prometheus? Can any person so disingenuous, so unambitious, and so unassuming as Meursault possibly be a monster? Camus himself compounds the difficulty in the brief preface he wrote in 1955 for an American textbook edition of *The Stranger*:

> Sometime ago I summed up *The Stranger* in a sentence, which I grant is very paradoxical: "In our society any man who doesn't cry at his mother's burial runs the risk of being condemned to death." I meant simply that the book's hero is condemned because he doesn't play the game. . . . He refuses to lie.
>
> . . .
>
> For me Meursault is no derelict but a poor naked man in love with a sun that leaves no shadows. Far from lacking feeling, he is animated by a profound passion – profound because it remains mute, a passion for the absolute and for the truth.
>
> . . .
>
> I have also gone so far as to say, paradoxically once again, that I tried to present in Meursault the only Christ we deserve. It should be clear from my remarks that I intend no blasphemy and speak only with the slightly ironic affection an artist has the right to feel toward the characters he has created.

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These astonishing claims have rarely been challenged. Originally, Camus said in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he conceived Meursault as a figure of "negation." He allowed a haunting ambiguity to hover over his laconic hero. Fifteen years later in the passage quoted above, Camus presents Meursault as a hero of nonconformity and uncompromising truth. René Girard's essay, "Camus's Stranger Retried," makes a strong case for Camus having written in 1958, in *The Fall,* a thoroughgoing rebuttal of "the implicit indictment of the judges" expressed by *The Stranger.* I fully concur with Girard's description of how Camus attempts in *The Stranger* to narrate a crime without a criminal. The puzzle lies in how the 1955 preface could distill the original ambiguity into a Christ figure, whereas first *The Rebel* (1951) and then *The Fall* distance themselves increasingly from this Romantic myth of the persecuted self.

So how we should read *The Stranger*? Has Camus forgotten that Meursault lies at least twice for Raymond: once in writing the letter to the Moorish woman who, Raymond claimed, had cheated on him; and once to the police? Was Meursault condemned to death for refusing to lie and to play the game of saying more than he feels? Or was he guilty of letting himself be drawn into settling a score for a violent small-time pimp and of killing an Arab? Like the students I have quoted, Camus in his preface insists that Meursault is condemned for his sincerity. Camus conveniently overlooks that fact that his hero committed murder. I believe that Camus's preface provides a case of an author who grievously misunderstands his own work and his most famous character. Possibly his repetition of "paradoxical" and his use of "ironic" in the last sentence should lead us to reverse the meanings of "hero" and "Christ." But I don't think so. Camus's wandering yet succinct prose in his novel seems to have hypnotized him along with his readers.

We should be closer now to perceiving the paradox of *The Stranger.* How do we explain our spontaneous or perverse admiration for a generally morose citizen who is duped into murder and experiences no remorse? In comparison, Adam and Eve and even Faust display greater responsibility for the consequences of their deeds. In Part One Meursault makes no effort to hide his feelings, if he can find any. He remains insensitive to his own actions and to their consequences for others. Though his new girlfriend, Marie, has a name and sometimes occupies his thoughts, she barely concerns him as a person any more than does his nameless victim, the Arab. Meursault is self-absorbed rather than self-conscious and describes tiny sensations of eating, waiting, smoking, and watching – describes them so vividly that we are drawn into his vacuous life. Then, yielding to the gradually accelerating tempo of the style, we live through the whole sun-spangled, heat-driven scene on the beach *from the inside.* It

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assumes the monstrous form of sheer accident enacted as inexorable fate. A slow accumulation of fragmentary sensations absorbs us into a mind that does not draw back from – from what? From letting his "whole being tense up" in such a way as to make him squeeze the trigger of the loaded gun that just happens to be in his hand. But the deafening report of the shot wakes him at last out of his zombie-like existence. At that moment "everything began," and Meursault "understood" what had happened, what he had done. Instead of recoiling, he now affirms his half-conscious deed by deliberately firing four more shots into the dead Arab. The sleepwalker becomes a criminal who feels exhilaration. He does not become a human being appalled at the spectacle of murder. The shock of a criminal act gives Meursault his first startling experience of being alive as himself.

"It requires a considerable effort on [the reader's] part to disengage himself from the rhetoric of the story to the extent of recognizing something monstrous" in the principal character. What Denis Donoghue says in *Thieves of Fire* about D. H. Lawrence's story, "The Captain's Doll," applies accurately to readers of *The Stranger*. Most readers accept their first sympathetic response to poor, unambitious, victimized Meursault. The seemingly artless way he tells his own story disarms our ability to detect an unreliable narrator. *The Stranger* offers the most convincing version ever written, I would say, of the sincerity plea made in exoneration of an incontrovertibly criminal action. The rhetoric apparently deceived Camus himself a decade later. Meursault's "sincerity" in Part One lies close to incipient autism. In Part Two, during the extended process of waking up to himself as a responsible person, Meursault yearns both to revert to the soulless existence of Part One and to dismiss the perfectly justified guilty verdict by defying it. Both responses constitute a lie to himself as a potential human being

I cannot help seeing this miniature novel called *The Stranger* as a parable, a piece of subtle didactic writing whose meaning reveals itself gradually to those who read carefully. But because of the subtle blandishments of the inside narrative, which often seduce readers and even the author into empathizing with a criminal, the parable misfires. The moral lesson, that no existence can be called human that does not accept a minimum of responsibility for itself, for its actions, and for others, is too easily overlooked. I remain astonished at the extent of misunderstanding and distortion that Camus expressed in his 1955 preface.

I believe a proverb will help explain why so many readers of *The Stranger* are led into seeing a monstrous criminal as a hero of authenticity, and why the dilemma of Captain Vere in *Billy Budd* develops a very dif-

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ferent hold on us in a comparable situation. The proverb which comes to hand here has wide familiarity. Yet it appears in only one standard collection. Its generic form appears to be French:

Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.

We translate it into English tersely, dropping the *tout*:

To understand is to forgive.

Some modern variants add local color and alliteration. "Never criticize anyone till you've walked a mile in his moccasins." The poet Henri Michaux includes this cautionary pastoral version in one of his collections, "If the wolf understands the sheep, he'll die of hunger." However phrased, these distillations of folk wisdom deal with the power of empathy to sway our judgment.

So arresting a formula as "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner" could not long exist without generating its polar opposite. La Rochefoucauld provides a subtle version, "If the world were aware of the motives behind them, we would often be ashamed of our finest actions." In other words: To understand is to condemn. G. B. Shaw says so without flinching, "If a great man could make us understand him, we should hang him." We could recast it in neutral terms: Full understanding compels full judgment. But when do we ever reach full understanding?

I single out "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner" in part because the proverb links our tendency to heroicize Meursault to the spell of Camus's seemingly transparent narrative style. That style makes us believe we understand Meursault. But the proverb also encapsulates a variant of moral relativism. Travellers have always noticed that customs and laws can be very different on the other side of a frontier. Montaigne condoned cannibalism among South American Indians, not in his native Bordeaux. Not until modern times has relativism been widely applied *within* a culture. In the opening pages of *Diary of a Writer* Dostoevsky editorializes about the "acquittal mania" affecting juries across Russia in the 1870s. Juries see criminals as victims of circumstance. "Who is guilty? The environment is guilty . . . there are no crimes at all." Though Nietzsche found ways to justify crime and immorality among the strong, he could not tolerate sympathy for misconduct among the weak:

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One knows the kind of human being who has fallen in love with the motto, *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.* It is weak . . . It is the philosophy of disappointment that wraps itself so humanely in pity and looks sweet. *(The Will to Power,* 81*)*

As a young man Marcel Proust twice filled out a questionnaire that included the following item: "For what faults do you have the greatest indulgence?" At age twelve Proust answered: "For the private life of geniuses." At age seventeen: "For those I understand." In Robert Musil's immense novel *The Man Without Qualities,* the character Moosbrugger, rapist and murderer, becomes the darling of intellectuals who admire his forthright testimony and find reasons to exculpate his behavior. Moosbrugger begins to look like a wily jovial version of Meursault. Thomas Mann sets the scene for the inside narrative of *Death in Venice* by alerting us to its moral content. After a long period of doubt and antisocial thinking, Aschenbach has returned "from every moral skepticism" to a more balanced view of individual responsibility. This change is described as "the counter move to the laxity of the sympathetic principle, that to understand all is to forgive all."

Every one of these authors recognizes the empathy-sincerity plea: anyone in the same situation would do the same thing. Proust seems to welcome it. Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Musil, and Mann resist it. One cannot easily find the origin of this willingness to abdicate moral judgement, which seems to have grown throughout the twentieth century. In the West, relativism received impetus from the Enlightenment challenge to Christian morality. It was then that Lessing and Goethe calmly and cavalierly offered a new model of Faust. The personage formerly condemned to Hell, after a lengthily documented life of presumed "striving" that causes many deaths and much grief and destruction, now floats comfortably up to Heaven at God's express command. The Lord, especially in the Prologue in Heaven, seems to "understand" Faust all too well and to forgive him in advance.

A discussion of the lures and perils of relativism could send us on a lengthy journey. Let me return, instead, to the generic proverb in order to examine its terms and its structure.

Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner.
To understand is to forgive.

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Composed of two infinitives (in English, in the absolute form) and the rudimentary copula *is,* the proverb takes the schematic form of a logical proposition, even of a mathematical equation. But we quickly realize that it applies not to everything in the universe but only to human actions, particularly to wrongful and evil actions.

To understand. The verb implies many things. First, as affirmed by Terence and Montaigne and Vico, it implies that each of us contains the whole human condition in potentiality, reaching to the furthest extremes of virtue and monstrosity, altruism and autism. Second, the verb *to understand* implies that we all have in varying degrees the capacity to explore that range of moods and behaviors. We call that capacity for mental exploration and experimentation *imagination,* as if it were a faculty, almost an organ. Imagination is obviously a highly complex process yet as essentially human as primary processes like feeling and reason. Third, the verb *to understand* often implies that when imagination seems to carry us convincingly into another mind by empathy, we tend to interpret that person's behavior as caused by some form of fate or determination. In the twentieth century we may choose between an exterior fate contained in society, culture, and the environment, and an interior fate – either genetic inheritance or the unconscious. To "understand" someone's behavior in this sense means to attribute it to a set of causes and to remove it from the domain of choice and free will. That form of understanding denies individual agency and responsibility for one's actions. Under such circumstances, not much remains to forgive. Fourth, *to understand* may also mean a mental operation not of empathy but of detachment and measured judgment. We seek such understanding in order to obtain a fair trial. Here any inside narrative is subject to correction by the outside narrative of other witnesses. But the received interpretation of the proverb sets aside this meaning of *to understand* in favor of the previous meaning of empathy, of entering another person's consciousness.

After "to understand" we have another pair of words to examine: *to pardon* and *to forgive.* In common speech we barely distinguish between them. The French generally use the one verb, *pardonner,* to cover all the ground. "Mon Père, pardonnez-leur, car ils ne savent pas ce qu'ils font." (Luke 23: 34) But the English for Christ's words on the cross could never be "Pardon them, for they know not what they do." When we translate the French proverb as "To understand is to forgive," we have made the right choice for English. To forgive supposes an act of imaginative empathy toward a fellow human being. To pardon engages the system of justice. To clarify these nuances, we need to look at a cluster of terms the English language offers us in this context. I ask for the reader's patience in an attempt to deal more precisely with words than is always necessary.

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The verbs *to exonerate* and *to exculpate* mean to clear someone of a charge, to determine that there is no offense and therefore no guilt to absolve. Two further verbs have a more restricted meaning. *To pardon* means to remit the punishment or penalty for an offense – and by implication to recognize guilt for the offense. *To forgive* grants remission of guilt for an offense and of the resentment it may entail. The punishment is not suspended. "Starry" Vere as a man could forgive Billy for his explosive response to Claggart's lie; Captain Vere could not pardon the sailor under his command. To pardon designates a legal act; to forgive designates a moral response. After conviction for a tort or wrong-doing, legally one discharges the penalty unless pardoned. Morally, whether forgiven or not, one is called upon to repent and do penance. Too often today we entirely overlook the last moral duty.

These distinctions among loosely used terms yield a schematic outline of five possible outcomes, *legal and moral,* when a person is brought to trial for an alleged crime:

1. Acquittal: no grounds for guilt or punishment
2. Conviction: sentencing, punishment exacted
3. Conviction and pardon: guilt maintained, punishment remitted
4. Conviction and forgiveness: guilt absolved, punishment maintained
5. Crime without a criminal: no guilt, no punishment (empathy-sincerity plea)

If we try to locate *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger* along this sequence derived from the proverb, "To understand is to forgive," *Billy Budd* fits neatly enough into the fourth category. Because of attenuating circumstances and his "nobility" of character, all parties forgive Billy yet acknowledge the need for maintaining the severity of the punishment. *The Stranger* poses knottier problems. Outwardly the novel conforms to the second category. At the end Meursault has been convicted and is awaiting execution. The inside narrative strives to make a case for inclusion in the first category. But since neither the evidence nor Meursault's confession will justify acquittal, the first-person narrator patiently builds up the psychological climate for inclusion in the fifth category. Meursault appears to be telling the simple truth about himself. The empathy-sincerity plea begins to blur all distinctions. As readers we are drawn so vividly into Meursault's affectless consciousness that notions of wrongdoing and guilt fade away as quickly as the smoke from Meursault's cigarettes. Meanwhile the details of the story keep suggesting that Meursault is merely human, all too human.

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A similar defense was offered for crucial contributions to the Nazi enterprise by a cultured architect with an immense talent for industrial organization. In *Inside the Third Reich,* Albert Speer argues passionately yet contritely that he was simply carried along by the demands made on his capacities. "Completely under the sway of Hitler, I was henceforth possessed by my work. Nothing else mattered." This highly-placed Meursault never looked directly at the abominations he was helping to commit. And he too carried many readers along with him because of his seemingly candid style.

I am proposing that the students who saw Meursault as "honest" and "misunderstood by a judgmental French society" fell into a serious error partially illuminated by the proverb, "to understand is to forgive." G. K. Chesterton called this attitude "the devil's sentimentality." Under carefully controlled conditions, as in listening to the "sincere" and seductive narrative voice of *The Stranger,* our empathy for another person can be stretched very far. We can venture too close and lose our perspective on humanity. Once we understand another life by entering it, by seeing it from inside, we may both pardon and forgive a criminal action. We may not even recognize it as criminal. We are all guilty in some way. How can we ever judge anyone else, punish anyone else?

That line of thinking leads to an unacceptable dilemma. Either justice is impossible and escapes us; or justice itself, if we do attempt to establish it, is inhuman. The action of *Billy Budd* confronts and blocks such slack thinking. Captain Vere in his fanatic resolve to maintain strict discipline aboard ship remains fully human, and tragic. But a failure of humanity and of judgment afflicts the reader who overlooks Meursault's obscurely motivated murder of an Arab and who finds that Meursault's flat account of the details of his everyday life redeems the rest of his conduct. How could such an ordinary and unassuming person be a murderer?

For a time Camus himself became one of those misguided readers. He seems to have forgotten what the Greek Oresteian trilogy, a set of tumultuous plays clearly related to *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger,* sets before us: that we cannot survive without a system of justice. We have a duty to judge and to punish crimes. (The death penalty is another question.) Orestes is not *pardoned.* He is finally *forgiven* the blood-guilt of matricide, but only after lengthy suffering at the hands of the Furies, genuine penance, and ritual cleansing. Justice is done, and a precedent is set. Two millennia later Benjamin Constant, a contemporary of Mary Shelley, expressed a proper scorn for explanations, analyses, and excuses for reprehensible actions: "I hate that fatuousness of a mind that excuses what it explains . . . and that analyzes itself instead of repenting." Constant favored repentance.

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The trials of Billy and of Meursault take place at a great moral distance from any potential "greatness in evil" as contemplated by La Rochefoucauld, Pascal, and Goethe. These two lowly men have not been infected with presumption and pleonexia. Their opposite fault lies in lack of imagination about themselves and others – in Meursault's case, extreme affectlessness. And now we have arrived unexpectedly at a highly disputed crossroads called "the banality of evil." Like Eichmann on trial for mass murder, Meursault serves to illustrate that challenging phrase dropped in the last sentence of Hannah Arendt's book on Eichmann. Over and over again afterwards she had to explain what she meant by the words:

> . . . this new type of criminal commits his crime under circumstances that make it well-nigh impossible for him to know or feel that he is doing wrong.
>
> . . .
>
> . . . when I speak of the banality of evil, I do so on a strictly factual level . . . Eichmann was not Iago and not Macbeth. . . . He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing . . . this lack of imagination . . . this sheer thoughtlessness . . . can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together.
>
> . . .
>
> [The purpose of the Eichmann book was] to destroy the legend of the greatness of evil, of the demonic force.

Billy did not intend to kill Claggart; the simple sailor did not know his own strength. If there is any greatness in Melville's novel, it resides in Captain Vere's struggle. Meursault appears to have no intentions at all; he lets himself be carried to catastrophe by a wave of circumstances. I find no greatness of mind or action in *The Stranger.* Camus's two powerful crescendos of narrative-descriptive style depict a man indifferent to good and evil losing control of himself because of the banality of his imagination. I believe that "the banality of evil" and Meursault's story afford an illumination of one of Plato's troubling notions in Book II of *The Republic:* "the true lie." "The lie in words," like deceiving an enemy or inventing a fable, may be useful. "The true lie" designates an "ignorance about the highest realities" in the soul of him who believes sincerely that he is acting rightly. "The true lie is not useful; it is hateful." Not knowing any better excuses nothing, even though it may explain much. Plato grants no standing to the sincerity plea, as behooves a philosopher who often attributes all virtues to knowledge.

A more substantial novel than the two we are discussing also explores this literary and moral question of dealing with a crime seen from inside.

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Dostoevsky originally sketched out *Crime and Punishment* in the first person; the final third-person version remains very close to Raskolnikov and often enters his thoughts, feelings, and dreams. We frequently identify with Raskolnikov and may even feel the lure of nihilistic egoism that seethes beneath his decency and idealism. But Dostoevsky supplies other characters and probing conversations to point up and offset the monster Raskolnikov carries within him. Unlike Camus, Dostoevsky does not indict the judges and the jury and does not create undue sympathy for the criminal. Raskolnikov is convicted and serves his sentence at hard labor. Through this penance and through his faith in Sonia, he may find forgiveness and redemption. Because we see him in the round, we understand Raskolnikov far better than we do Meursault.

The comparison of *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger* affords a rare opportunity for literary and psychological diagnosis. The former novel helps correct the common misreading of the latter. We see the truth most clearly when it comes to us in the form of an error dispelled. *The Stranger* enacts a scandalous moral irony, though difficult to detect in the narrative of a near-automaton man. Meursault, the modest white-collar worker for whom most modern readers come to feel strong empathy, really is a monster. Camus has written the equivalent of a moral labyrinth from which some readers will not escape.

"A sin," writes Coleridge in *Aids to Reflection,* "is an evil which has its ground or origin in the agent, and not in the compulsion of circumstances." Billy and Meursault lack a strong sense of self and of agency. Therefore the murders they commit can be painted to look like the consequence of "the compulsion of circumstances." Camus, by composing an "inside narrative" in the first person, links our sympathies so closely with the tiny sensuous rewards and the general affectlessness of Meursault's life that we may lose our moral bearings. That is why the proverb, "To understand is to forgive," can strike us –wrongly – as indulgent rather than cautionary.

But how much can we understand? Can we ever peer beyond the caul of selfhood that enfolds us by the time we begin to talk and to answer to our name? Can we know another person? Our tentative answers to those questions usually fall into a few areas of inquiry known as literature and philosophy and history, areas we lump together as "the humanities." Across the centuries the humanities have offered a broad set of answers fluctuating between faith and doubt. Ours has been predominantly a century of doubt. In *Swann's Way,* one of our most philosophical novelists, Marcel Proust, answers those fundamental questions in the negative by borrowing a metaphor from physics:

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When I saw an external object, my consciousness that I was seeing it remained between me and it, outlining it with a narrow mental border that prevented me from ever touching its substance directly; in some way the object volatized before I could make contact, just as an incandescent body approaching something moist never reaches moisture because of the zone of evaporation that always precedes such a body.

In this description our isolation is inescapable. But a few pages later Proust made an exception for works of literature: their transparency permits us miraculous entry into other lives composed not of opaque flesh but of comprehensible words. Thus we can pose the fundamental questions again and with different results concerning the two literary works *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger*. Their carefully composed sentences manipulate our attention and our understanding and our sympathy in very specific ways. And now we must acknowledge, as I have suggested earlier, two markedly different senses of the word to *know* or to *understand*.

Though Billy is given stronger status as the legendary Handsome Sailor than as a realistic particularized individual, the essentially third-person narrative approaches very close to his consciousness. We feel the menace behind the triviality of the soup-spilling scene; we share Billy's impatience with the after-guardsman's attempt to talk to him alone in the lee forechains. But by the time we read the central scene of Claggart accusing Billy in the captain's presence of conspiring to mutiny, we have enough familiarity with Billy's temperament and vocal handicap to understand his striking Claggart a blow that turns out to be fatal – a blow in the name of simple truth. Captain Vere's first response – "Fated boy," he breathes – informs us both that he understands Billy's explosive outburst well enough to forgive it and that nevertheless Billy will have to suffer the full legal consequences of his insubordination and homicide. Melville adjusts the story line so as to carry us just far enough inside Billy and Vere to allow us to deplore and to accept the tragic outcome. Claggart remains a "mesmeric" mystery. Our understanding of Billy and of Vere does not, in an intelligent reading, paralyze our judgment. Our understanding complicates and enlarges our judgment.

The Stranger has the opposite effect on most of its readers. By the time we reach the central scene of the shooting on the beach, our point of view has adapted itself to Meursault's passiveness before other people's initiatives and before the sheer momentum of an episode once started. We probably accept the metaphor that the whole landscape heaves up ("C'est alors que tout a vacillé.") and propels him toward the fatal act. We are seduced and blinded by the circumstantial narrative to the point of overlooking the pit of monstrosity that opens up around his action.

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The students in their papers and Camus in his preface have "understood" in the sense of empathizing with Meursault's absorption in a pure present without history or responsibility. That perspective impedes their judgment even during the second part when Meursault gains enough detachment to glimpse his own guilt.

In its impact on people's behavior and sense of "alienation" and by its apparent sincerity of feeling, *The Stranger* came close to becoming the mid-twentieth century equivalent of Goethe's earliest bestseller, *Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1774. It provoked hundreds of suicides all over Europe. Werther cannot explain to himself the sentiment he has of disintegration and decline from the ideal nobility of heart inspired in him by Lotte's perfection. His rebellion turns him first against the society that supports him and then against himself in a carefully staged suicide. *Werther* and *The Stranger* are excessively romantic and self-absorbed stories verging on solipcism. Meursault has no inkling of how estranged he is from human life until he is arrested for destroying another life. Then his brief rebellion burns itself out on a well-intentioned priest, and Meursault tries to transform his execution into a symbolic suicide by choosing it, by welcoming it. Werther's over-reaching of sentiment in the eighteenth century collapses into Meursault's twentieth-century listless "absurd," and the influence of the latter echoes the enormous vogue of the former. If Camus had told us the color of Meursault's shirt, it would have set off a fashion as widespread as that of Werther's yellow waiscoat.

Camus perfected a hypnotic prose style combining Hemingway's laconicism, Kafka's sense of tragicomic inscrutability in all things, and Voltaire's deadpan portrayal of naiveté in *Candide*. The resulting novella entraps us all on first reading. We feel more fascination than horror at the course Meursault's life takes. Our inside knowledge of his deeds becomes a form of bewitchment or possession, difficult to exorcise, leading us to suspend judgment, even to unseat justice. A small leap of association permits us to read beyond the highly-charged literal meaning of *The Stranger* to discern a double parable about contemporary events that were taking place in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. Meursault stands for the citizen whose passiveness and stunted imagination allow him to yield to outside pressures to carry out inhuman action. And readers who sympathize unthinkingly with Meursault stand for potential accomplices and collaborators in his actions. The power of the book's political significance arises from the fact that it remains entirely implicit. The risk of misreading Camus's novel lies in the appeal of the empathetic knowledge it offers us of an enigmatic character only too easy to identify with. Is there, consequently, a point at which we must beware of such knowledge? Beware of empathy?

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The two novels I have been discussing, particularly *The Stranger* with its suggestive title, lead us to one of the more distressing categories of forbidden knowledge. The closer one approaches to an event or to a person, the less securely one seems to know it. The trees obscure the forest. The more one knows the less one knows. Perception itself requires a certain distance. Empathy hides more than it reveals.

More than most modern philosophers, Isaiah Berlin strives to reconcile empathy for others with reasonable standards of decency and moral behavior. But when in "Historical Inevitability" he carefully glosses the proverb, "To understand is to forgive," Berlin has the honesty to write, "To understand all is to see that nothing could be otherwise than as it is." That proposition precisely describes the character of Pangloss in *Candide.* What Berlin presents discursively in his essays, Melville and Camus approach very differently in their fiction. In both kinds of writing the author is thinking in terms of imaginary situations, conducting thought experiments in order to reflect upon the meaning and worth of human actions. The difference is that whereas Berlin carries out the crucial parts of his thought experiments in terms of freedom, authority, natural rights, and other abstractions removed from persons and from time, Melville and Camus create their thought experiments on empathy (particularly on the reader's empathy) in terms of fully conceived characters subject to all the contingencies of time and mortality. They stage an action to show how knowing too much can affect us, perhaps blind us, even when we have gained that knowledge from the essential faculty of empathy. The double bind of empathy as laid before us by *Billy Budd* and *The Stranger* points us finally in the direction of a middle way between moral certainty and moral ignorance.

In the opening pages of *The Myth of Sisyphus,* Camus speaks of seeking to know people by analysis of their actions, both sincere and insincere. Then he concedes, "The method defined here admits to the feeling that any true knowledge is impossible." But Camus exaggerates. He and we know the truth that Meursault murders a man and deserves punishment. But we shall never know exactly *why* he did it. In trying to fathom that mystery of iniquity we can lose our way and come to find no fault and no guilt in so sincere and so unassuming a temperament. Melville's novel helps us to see in Camus's tale the severe interference between two types of knowledge, inside and outside. Between them, the two stories offer a striking moral education.

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ROBERT WISTRICH

Israel Past and Future

Edith Kurzweil: Welcome to what promises to be an interesting evening with Robert Wistrich, Professor of Modern European and Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. One of his recent books is *The Shaping of Israeli Identity. Myth, Memory, and Trauma,* edited with David Ohana. Robert will begin by speaking about Israeli identity, a very central issue related to the discussion of recent events, to the aftermath of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, and to the peace talks. I am sure you will ask him many questions. I myself would like to get a sense of the predictions about the upcoming elections. I would like to know not only what the polls predict but what he believes a victory by Labour or the Likud government would bring in its wake and how each of the outcomes might or might not influence the ongoing peace talks. Also, I would like to get a sense of what Israelis feel or fear were they to give up strategic positions on the Golan Heights, whether or not they worry about resettling former hijackers and terrorists in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Robert Wistrich: I think this is an appropriate moment to consider what is undoubtedly a crossroads in Israel's history, possibly even a critical turning-point. Twenty-four hours ago I gave a lecture in London on the anniversary of the publication of Herzl's *Judenstaat,* which first appeared in Vienna on February 14, 1896. So we are one hundred years on from that momentously important tract which inaugurated the history of political Zionism. If we look at the longer perspective, then not only are we are talking about a century of Zionism but also that in two years' time it will be exactly fifty years since the creation of Israel as an independent state.

Let me begin by trying to delineate a few things about the current mood and atmosphere in Israel a few months before the coming elections.

Despite the Rabin assassination, the suicide bombs, the fanatical terrorist violence and anxiety about Palestinian intentions, most people living in Israel know that things are getting much better economically. In many ways the country is booming. It has experienced an unprecedented emigration from the former Soviet Union. Indeed, over five hundred thousand ex-Soviet Jews have come in the last six to seven years; they

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represent today over ten percent of the entire Jewish population of the country. Although there are many problems relating to the integration of the Russian *aliya,* it has nevertheless had a considerable impact, contributing to the consumer boom in Israel. The Russian immigration may even have a decisive impact on the outcome of Israel's upcoming elections. These elections wil be determined not only by the peace process, the level of the terrorist threat posed by the Hamas and the Hezbollah, but also by bread-and-butter issues which are the normal stuff of politics in the Western democracies.

Obviously, questions relating to the territories, war and peace, and personal security are of overriding importance. The quality of leadership and the respective strategies offered by the leaders of the two main parties, Shimon Peres, the Prime Minister, and his Likud opponent, Benjamin Netanyahu, will certainly influence the electorate. So, too, will the perspectives on offer for enabling Israel to maintain its national unity, to conduct an all-out war on suicide terrorism, and at the same time to continue on a path that can guarantee its prosperity and economic integration in the Middle East.

I believe that despite the violence, enmity, and fanaticism with which Israel has to contend, this economic factor will play an increasingly important role in the consciousness of Israelis, in their perception of their own country and its future, and in understanding and defining their own identity. Despite or because of the boom, disparities of income in Israeli society have in fact been growing fast over the last decade. Analysts of Israeli society sometimes see this as one of the symptoms of the "Americanization" of Israel, which, in turn, provokes a great deal of internal polemic. Some people, including intellectuals, often see this as a bad thing. For them, Americanization implies a materialistic, consumer-oriented society which will be in danger of losing its coherence, its value system and core beliefs – the Zionist ideology and the myths that sustained it in the early years of the Jewish state. Others are more sanguine about the effects of the new individualism, the technological sophistication and economic liberalism which are freeing the country from the tyranny of outworn ideologies and dogmas. For them, an Israel which has outgrown its mystique of "heroic," self-sacrificing patriotism seems at once both more modern and more mature.

The optimistic view has much to recommend it, though it ignores the accelerating social gap between haves and have-nots, the latter left behind and rendered obsolete by the rapidity of technological change. This is a serious problem in all Western societies, including the United States, but in Israel it is potentially explosive, given the crucial role played by social cohesion in maintaining national unity and purpose. This brings

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me to a related issue – the current status of some of Israel's founding myths – in the eyes of a section of its own intelligentsia.

You may have heard that one of the more interesting current debates in Israel – initially confined mainly to historians, writers, and academics – revolves around the claim that Israel has entered a new phase of its short history, commonly referred to as post-Zionism. This appellation would seem to imply that Zionism has ceased to be relevant to the values and identity of contemporary Israelis; that it has completed or played out its historic function. This is probably the most benign view of post-Zionism which we could take, in which the "post" merely means that which comes *after* Zionism, without any particular value-judgement being involved. However, I would argue that most historians who define themselves as post-Zionists are often difficult to distinguish from those who were considered only a decade or two ago to be outright anti-Zionists. I can still vividly recall the 1970s, when I used to argue in Great Britain and other European countries against the fashionable left-wing denigration of Zionism and Israel as a tool of Western imperialism and as an essentially colonialist enterprise. Today, many of the theses which were so commonplace at that time are now being recycled by post-Zionist Israelis, as if they were the latest in political and historical wisdom.

What does this trend add up to? It is surely significant that the post-Zionists have focused focus on the 1948 War (the Israeli war of independence and the birth of the Jewish state), as if it were a creation conceived in the state of "original sin," since it resulted in the "dispossession" and flight of so many Palestinian Arabs. It must therefore have been an act of historic injustice. Indeed, for the post-Zionists, Israel has been a "colonial fact" since its foundation. What is now called the Israeli-Zionist "narrative," is thereby reduced to a propagandist self-serving account of the past which at best can be put on a par with the equally valid Palestinian version of Israel's history. However, post-Zionism, with its built-in sympathy for the Palestinian case, tends to lend far more credence to the "victims" of the conflict and therefore to morally delegitimize Israel's foundation, even if it does not challenge the Jewish state's right to exist.

The effect of this post-Zionist revisionism inevitably undermines any kind of special, moral or historic claim that the Jewish people or the Zionist movement might have to the territory that is now called Israel. In the old-new post-Zionist Israeli form of "political correctness," Israel was never really peace-loving or the Arab states belligerent; Israel consistently missed or avoided opportunities for peace; it has been an oppressive power, regularly inflicting injustice on hapless Arabs and relying solely on force to maintain its existence. The new historians seek to totally divorce

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Israel from the Holocaust experience and to detach Israeli identity from Jewish history and world Jewry.

Post-Zionism began as an essentially academic revision of Israel's history, but I think it can be linked with some wider cultural trends. Broadly speaking, I would say that current fashion involves the slaughtering of virtually all the sacred cows which have ever existed since the founding of the Jewish state.

Some of this revision is harmless enough, some of it less so. It involves the debunking of almost every important statesman or leading military figure in the Israeli pantheon. The Israeli heroes of yesteryear have turned out to be men or women with feet of clay. I find it hard to think of one who has not been greatly reduced in stature. Significantly, for the new generation, the once-respected leaders of the country seem much less attractive as role-models than do popular singers, actors, comedians, or sports heroes. You might say that this is a sign of Israel's normalization – a phenomenon that one can observe in other countries. After all, this has been commonplace enough in the Western world for many years. Perhaps Israel is simply coming of age, exhibiting a more relaxed outlook. Perhaps, too, this is even a healthy development, for what could be more natural than the aspiration to enjoy a peaceful, untroubled existence without the burdens of endless struggle? But there is a price to be paid for such a debunking of Israel's past – the most dangerous being the loss of the reality principle. Despite postmodernist and post-Zionist rhetoric, reality is not merely subjective, and history is not only the imagined construct of the historian. Facts are stubborn, and Israel is transparently not yet at peace. When people begin to confuse their understandable wishes for reality, they are likely to be in for a rude awakening. In the case of Israel, the temptation to accelerate the peace process, to plunge ahead by gambling on a "new Middle East," contains many internal as well as external risks.

This is particularly evident when one looks at what has been taking place since 1992, with the accession of a liberal-left government. Its dialogue with the PLO and reliance on Mr. Arafat's promises as well as its negotiaions with Syria have been very divisive domestically. If this were not enough, the tragic assassination of Mr. Rabin highlighted the abysmal lack of communication and mutual respect between religious and secular elements in Israeli society. The assassination has spelled out the terrible costs of the continuing polarization within the Israeli body politic which produced the climate of defamation that ultimately made such an act possible.

The personal biography of the late Prime Minister of Israel is of course well known. He was deeply involved at every important cross-

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roads in Israel's history from 1948 on: he was chief of staff in the 1967 War, and as Prime Minister since 1992, he embarked on the brave but highly risky path of returning those very territories whose conquest he had masterminded twenty-five years earlier. Mr. Rabin also represented the last major link with what is commonly called in Israel the Palmach generation – the architects and driving force of Israel's war of independence. More than any other leading Israeli politician on the left, he incarnated the rough-hewn, plain-speaking Sabra. This was often seen in Israel as a mark of his personal integrity and lack of guile, which I think is largely accurate. But Rabin's bluntness did not favor the development of an internal Jewish dialogue or consensus on issues that go to the heart of Israel's existence, its *raison d'être* and its future.

This flaw was one of the more unfortunate aspects of his incumbency as prime minister. Rabin was a remarkable soldier-politician in many ways, but not a man ideally suited to act as a bridge between those sections of the Israeli public that were increasingly drifting apart. I am thinking in particular of the sense of alienation that developed among the Jewish settlers in Judea and Samaria, and what can be broadly called the religious right. Their sense of anxiety and marginalization grew increasingly acute in light of the radical policies that have been pursued since 1992. Undoubtedly, they were taken aback by the disdainful attitudes apparent in Mr. Rabin's own abrasive language towards them.

Beyond their immediate day-to-day security concerns, he appeared to be uninterested in generating the kind of dialogue with the settlers that Israel had engaged in with the PLO. In turn, this produced a feeling among the settlers that they were somehow a "foreign body" within the Jewish state. Moreover, they were consistently stigmatized as obstacles to peace by the Israeli media as well as prominent ministers and officials. On the other side, the Israeli right was equally guilty of intemperate language, of unfounded aspersions on the patriotism of government leaders and of organizing disruptive demonstrations that heated up the political debate to dangerous levels of incitement.

Rabin's assassin was probably influenced by this general climate even if he acted alone and out of religious conviction. Yigal Amir is as good an example as any Muslim fanatic of how explosive the mix of fundamentalist faith and integral nationalism can become when it is divorced from humanist values and respect for the democratic rights of those with whom one disagrees. In Amir's world-view, any renunciation of territory by Israel was an act of betrayal; both Rabin and Peres were literally destroying the future of the country – thwarting the god-given redemption of Israel through the acquisition and occupation of the whole land of Israel. Such actions meant that they both deserved death. Many people in Israel and

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outside of the country were shocked to discover that such fanatically intolerant attitudes were more common than they had supposed. I find that curious because the seeds have been there for a long time and are well known to better-informed analysts of Israeli society.

There was nothing basically new in most of the ideological assumptions that motivated an individual like Yigal Amir. Nor is political assassination as such something unprecedented or as novel in Israel as was implied in some of the comments immediately after Rabin's murder. It is true that it was the first time a prime minister was assassinated in Israel. There were, however, political assassinations in the pre-state period, most notably the Arlosoroff murder in the 1930s which has never been definitively laid to rest. Significantly, it embittered and envenomed the politics of the Yishuv for many decades. Blamed by the left on the "revisionist" Zionist movement led by Jabotinsky, the assassination of Chaim Arlosoroff (who was then the most promising younger leader of Mapai) would help set back the pre-Israel Zionist right for a generation.

After Rabin's murder, it was no surprise, therefore, that opinion polls gave Mr. Peres a large and seemingly decisive lead in the personal contest for prime minister over Mr. Netanyahu. This was obviously a direct outcome of the fall-out from the assassination. Before that tragic event, the two main parties had been running more or less neck and neck. If Yigal Amir had wanted to insure the election of a Labour prime minister, then there was nothing more likely to achieve such a goal than his cold-blooded act. He wanted to derail a peace process that he believed was leading Israel to catastrophe. Instead, the immediate consequence was to accelerate the process begun by Mr. Rabin.

The halo of martyrdom bestowed on Rabin ensured that a groundswell of sympathy surrounded his successor, Mr. Peres. Peres could never match Rabin's reputation as "Mr. Security," despite the major role he has played in creating and developing Israel's defense capacities. Nor did he enjoy the same degree of public trust, though his diplomatic talent was certainly recognized. For years, he had been Rabin's bitterest rival in Labour Party politics, and until the peace process began, they had never been able to effectively work together. But since the assassination and despite the domestic distrust of his intentions, Peres's image as a national leader has greatly improved.

What does all this mean in the long run? Has there been a significant transformation of Israeli politics, of the tone of the debate, and a change in the perception of core issues? If we look at three major areas that confront Israel in its domestic and external affairs – the Golan, Jerusalem, and the future of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank – then the present government is faced with some very tough dilemmas. On the Golan issue

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and negotiations with Syria, Peres has tried, initially, to move more boldly than Rabin, but the outcome is not really in Israel's hands. The Syrians, it seems to me, are not really interested in any serious normalization of their relations with Israel, least of all in opening up what is essentially a police state resistant to any hint of democratization. Their notion of negotation is to continue the Lebanese War by proxy against Israel, turning a blind eye to Hezbollah assaults on the Jewish State, which they could easily halt. Moreover, they are allied with Iran, currently Israel's worst enemy in the Middle East. In any case, their real objective in negotations with Israel has always been to change United States policy and gain American acquiescence for their ambitions in the Middle East.

Syrian concern is much more with Lebanon and ensuring their hegemony there, rather than with the Golan as such. Obviously, they would not refuse to accept the strategically important Golan Heights if it could be obtained without any serious concessions. But not even Mr. Peres could afford that. He knows that there is no majority in Israel for returning the Golan, which would be a highly unpopular and imprudent move. Syria's intransigence has made things easier for him, especially in electoral terms.

Lebanon is another matter, since this is the one border with Israel which remains in a constant state of tension. The threat posed by Hezbollah – which is partly an extension of the Iranian determination to strike out at Israel – could be neutralized by Syria. But the Syrians have shown no inclination to do this, which suggests that the prospects of any deal with Syria are still remote.

Jerusalem, however, presents a different and (for someone like myself, who actually lives there) a very disturbing aspect of the current government policy. It was vividly brought home to me about a month ago, when I was at the Van Leer Institute situated in the center of Jerusalem. I stepped out from the Institute onto a balcony. A woman who was standing there, overlooking the beautiful garden, pointed in the direction of Bethlehem and said to me, "Well, that's the Palestinian Authority now." This information, of course, was not new to me, but it still registered as something of a shock, given the incredibly small distances involved. Since the West Bank cities (except for Hebron) have already been handed over under Oslo II, Israel has faced a potential security nightmare. The possibilities of terrorist violence are all too obvious, as recent events have demonstrated, and in Jerusalem (unlike most cities in Israel), the prospects of erecting a Chinese wall of separation from the Palestinian Arabs are virtually nil, even if this were desirable.

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The present Israeli government has again and again said that it is committed to the unity of Jerusalem as the nation's capital and that is non-negotiable. But if we consider only the diplomatic comings and goings at Orient House, these have in practice strengthened the position of the Palestinians in the coming battle over the future of Jerusalem. Hence there are good reasons to question how secure the declared status of Jerusalem as Israel's undivided capital really is. This status is of course totally rejected by Chairman Arafat and the PLO. In their eyes, "Al Quds" ("Jerusalem" in Arabic) is the ultimate objective of the Jihad and the future capital of the coming Palestinian state. I can see no way to reconcile these contradictory aspirations. Nor is there any convincing way to resolve the status of Jewish settlements within the Palestinian authority, which the present government has kept in place. With regard to the elections, everything remains open, though in balance I think that Mr. Peres is still likely to be re-elected as Prime Minister. Whateve the final outcome, these elections are probably the most crucial turning point since the establishment of the State of Israeli.

Edith Kurzweil: Thank you very much, Robert. I'd like to invite questions and comments from all of you.

Question: What form do you think the dialogue might take between secular Israelis and Orthodox Israelis? My understanding of the negotiations with the Syrians is that part of the *quid pro quo* would be a Syrian crackdown on Hamas activities in Damascus, and that therefore this is what Peres is interested in. Do you agree?

Robert Wistrich: I will start with the second point. I think that Peres made a smart move (from his point of view) in widening the scope of the negotiations with Syria. It is, of course, inconceivable that there could be any arrangement with the Syrians which would not include a guarantee that they would put an end to the activities of the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. This is a persistent festering sore that costs Israeli lives almost every day. And it is a continuous threat to Israeli civilians in Northern Galilee. Moreover, Hamas and all the Palestinian rejectionist organizations (which do not accept the Oslo agreement) – indeed all the anti-Israel terrorist organizations, have a base in Damascus.

It is a source of astonishment to me that Israel has never made it a condition to deal with Syria only after it takes decisive action to halt the proxy war it has engaged in for so many years on Israel's northern border; that it cease being a major center of terrorist activities against Israel. It seems to me that the United States has been more active than Israel, at

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least publicly, in making these demands. Clearly, America, for its own political reasons, is interested in maintaining the negotiations with Syria. But whether President Assad is interested in paying any reasonable price is another matter. I think that people may be underestimating how convenient the current status quo remains for Syria. What seems like a very favorable deal for Assad on the Golan may not look that way to him because he has to worry about the continuation of his own power-base in Syria. Under conditions of peace, that does not look quite so secure. I think popular expectations inside Syria would then build up, and his rather precarious position as an Alawite (a minority sect in Syria) would make him more vulnerable.

With regard to dialogue between religious and secular Israelis, it should be said that since the assassination there have been a number of grass-roots initiatives to try and get something going, for the first time. That effort has been a positive thing. Even among groups that never spoke to one another at all, there is now some attempt to find some sort of minimal common ground. The government also appointed Rabbi Amital to act as a bridge-builder between the secular and religious communities. I'm not convinced that he's really accepted in that role by the settler community in the territories.

But I think what happens at the grass-roots level is more important. In this context, it is distressing to realize that in the Israeli school system so many children are turned off by Jewish education of any kind. There was a statistic published recently, indicating that two-thirds of Israeli teenagers in the secular school system dislike or are hostile to any form of Jewish education. This is cause for concern, in light of the issues of Jewish continuity and Jewish education in the Diaspora. What I mean is that even in Israel, in a Jewish state where they speak Hebrew, there exists a serious problem with Jewish values and Jewish identity and how they are perceived by young Israelis. The problem is related to the sort of value-vacuum that, as I suggested earlier, exists in Israel.

Question: I wonder if you would comment on the problem of the minority immigrant groups in Israel, the Ethiopian, the Russian, and – what has been talked about over here recently – the large groups from North Africa and the Middle East.

Robert Wistrich: I don't think they would necessarily like to be referred to as minorities. Let's take the Russian Jews, who are now a political force. Nathan Sharansky has chosen to run for the Knesset, and various surveys show that his list, mainly representing the Russian immigrants, could gain anything from four to six seats. So he is really a kind of loose

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card in the pack, because it is not at all clear with which major political formation he would choose to identify or ally himself. It is worth noting that the Russian immigration has not had a very good press in Israel. If you speak to Russian immigrants, you're very likely to hear many complaints about the way they are portrayed in the Israeli media. The usual stereotyping that goes on, sometimes even in the more intelligent media, focuses on the Russian mafia, associating the immigrants with illegal drugs, prostitution, and crime. Anyone would think that a plague had descended upon the land of Israel, rather than what I believe to be in the long run one of the greatest boosts for the country's future: this immigration provides a tremendous addition of brain power, of highly-qualified people who have not only added to the prosperity of the Israeli economy in the present but whose children are going to greatly strengthen Israel in the future.

The sort of stigmatization that has been going on is quite out of place with regard to this *aliya*. There is no doubt that one can say this has also been the case with earlier waves of immigrants. But this sort of "consolation" does not alleviate the pain. I find it extraordinary, unjustifiable, and very distorted. Ethiopian Jews, of course, have recently manifested unprecedentedly violent anger. They feel deeply insulted by the idea that their blood is not acceptable, because of the allegedly higher incidence of AIDS in their community. It is a highly emotive issue, obviously very badly handled. Beyond that, there is the question of how they feel within Israeli society. I don't believe that this is primarily a problem of racism, though there is some color prejudice in Israel. Broadly speaking, I would say that prejudice against black people is significantly lower in Israel than in most Western societies and that on the whole, in everyday life, Ethiopian Jews have been rather well-treated by most Israelis. They may have more legitimate complaints about official behavior towards them. There is, for example, the important issue of their own kith and kin who are stranded in Ethiopia and whom the Israeli government hesitates to recognize as fully-fledged Jews. I feel for them in that there is surely something wrong in questioning the Jewish credentials of a community which has remained faithful to so many traditions of Judaism in adverse circumstances.

The issue of the North African Sephardim has not disappeared from Israeli politics, but it is much less important than I can recall it having been ten years ago. In fact, one of the reasons for the revolution in Israeli politics that began with Mr. Begin's election in 1977 was the bitterness and resentment that many Sephardic Jews felt toward a Labour establishment that had neglected and patronized them. For a number of years, I think, the Likud Party was seen as the best political vehicle available to

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express their many grievances. I think that era is probably over, because they are in the process of achieving success in every area of Israeli society. You find Sephardim among the *nouveau riches;* they are prominent in Israeli politics, in business, perhaps less so in the academy (which tends to be very conservative). I think that the old resentments and grievances may be diminishing. David Levy, for instance, split off from the Likud to form his own movement and announced that he would be a candidate for the premiership. That meant forming an ethnic list, though he denied it. I don't think there is a great future for that kind of politics in Israel today. Since then, Levy has returned to the Likud. The Sephardi-Ashkenazi divide seems to me to be losing in importance as other polarizations become more significant.

Question: I would like to know what the position of Likud is with regard to the West Bank. It's easy to be opposed; it's much more difficult to be in favor. What is it that the Likud is in favor of?

Robert Wistrich: I think that's a good question. It has been a major problem for the Likud, and one of the reasons why they were running behind the government in the polls. It's not just the effects of the Rabin assassination, although these have probably been more substantial. It seems to me that the Likud has been slow in developing a coherent and realistic alternative in the eyes of the Israeli public to the policy of the Rabin-Peres governments. They could perhaps claim that events moved much faster than anyone could have imagined a few years ago. Who would have thought in Israel, even among all the political pundits and experts, that we would be where we are now – with the completion of the Oslo II deal and the withdrawal of the Israeli army from all the major towns on the West Bank except Hebron. I think the mainstream opposition party was caught rather flat-footed by the sheer speed of these developments. It is only now that the process has become a *fait accompli* which it must recognize; that the Likud has begun to develop some sort of realistic alternative to the creation of a mini-Palestinian state.

The Likud can still salvage itself, because there are major issues which are far less clear-cut and potentially much more controversial than anything that has already been settled. Obviously, as I have suggested, the three major issues are the Golan, Jerusalem, and the Jewish settlements. I think that the Likud has begun to focus on them, but very late in the day. Mr. Netanyahu frequently found himself in a difficult spot when challenged by Israeli journalists. They would ask questions like, "Aren't you simply building your case on the politics of fear?" Or "Where is your constructive alternative plan about what we should do?" The feeling is

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that the Likud relies essentially on terrorist incidents to throw the Israeli public into a state of panic. When, as recently, these incidents occur, they boost the Likud's arguments about terror and the peace process. Once terrorist attacks are reduced to an "acceptable" rate, whatever that may be, then it seems the Israeli public is prepared to give the present government the benefit of the doubt. Neither the Likud nor the more extreme parties on the right have, however, been able to convince a majority of Israeli opinion that they have the answer. But on the Golan issue, I believe that a referendum would still show a majority of Israelis to be against withdrawal. Of course, it may depend on the way that question is formulated and the actual terms. The Likud has a major problem with formulating a coherent alternative, and to that extent it has contributed to its own current problems.

Question: I wonder whether you could address more directly something to which you have been alluding. There have always been two Israels: the myth and the dream, and a country that has bread-and-butter issues and social problems. And you seem to be saying that what's happening is that Israel is more and more becoming just another country. If you look at it in the long term, is this so? And if it is, how do Israelis feel about that?

Robert Wistrich: I feel that there is a very strong wish among a section of the Israeli public for normalization, even if it is a mirage. It seems to me to be stronger among Sabras and very potent in the academy among the people I know best. What they mean by normalization is not so much what it used to mean. The ideological vision once held by secular Zionism had as its main objective the creation in Israel of a nation among nations, a state among the states of the world. The idea was that Israel would be just like other countries, except that it would be a state of the Jewish people, a refuge for persecuted Jews, with a clear Jewish majority. That idea of normalization is still quite meaningful for many secular Israelis. But certain elements have been added to it in more recent years: a growing weariness with war, a strong desire to finish with having been besieged for so long. The siege mentality appears to be slowly dissipating. The hope is that perhaps we now really have an opportunity at hand that might finally lead to an integration of Israel in the region; where it can have something resembling normal relations with all of its neighbors, something along the lines of what it now already has with Jordan.

Israel's current relations with Jordan represent the first fairly warm peace that Israel has enjoyed with any of its Arab neighbors. The peace with Egypt, on the other hand, has always been a cold one, and this continues to be quite a worrying relationship. If the rest of the Arab world

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could develop relations with Israel like that of the present Hashemite monarchy, then I think we could begin to dream about a new Middle East. Of course, I think that Peres is very much hoping – though I don't personally believe this is feasible – that something like that could develop with Syria. This is what Israel presumably is holding out for, a Jordanian-style peace with Syria rather than an Egyptian one. Personally, I suspect that the Syrians are not even thinking of an Egyptian-style peace, but of something much less.

Normalization seems to me a very understandable human wish:an end to the ceaseless sacrifice; to the kind of demands that living in Israel places on its citizens, whether in terms of taxation or the number of days served in the army each year; to the levels of stress and anxiety. The wish for peace has been a powerful psychological force that has grown, more so as conditions in the wider world and the immediate environment have made it look more possible. This desire for normalization is working, politically speaking, in favor of the present government. Hence, Mr. Netanyahu has adopted a more dovish line in the upcoming elections. But I think the peace drive ignores quite a number of very important factors that suggest we are not yet in that kind of a situation. That's what I was alluding to.

Question: Mine is a direct follow-up to this question of normalcy, and whether there is an ideological component in it. Nothing could be more gladdening than this pragmatic intepretation of the new normalcy, as building upon the old ideological Zionist one. But it is also may be connected somehow to the claim that Zionism is justified only if it contributes significantly to the Arab world, which is part of the ideology of post-Zionism. This is sharpened by the fact that post-Zionism today is accompanied by a break with Judaism. It asserts: We are no longer Jews; we are people of the land whose fundamental loyalty is not with the Diaspora over there, but with the people who live in this land, and we should make that alliance. Therefore, disillusioned with the immigrants who do not come from the prosperous countries, we make that alliance and make peace rather than struggle on for refuge, and immigration, and homeland.

However, perhaps I am overstressing the theoretical and theological currents which underlie the more pragmatic elements you have identified.

Robert Wistrich: It's difficult to know where to begin to unravel all the things you've evoked here. I would say that probably the kind of discourse you bring up is part of that ideological and polemical tradition which increasingly, in Israel itself, is becoming a thing of the past. It's in-

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teresting that the kind of people who were really important Zionist thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s, like Nathan Rotenstreich, are a rare breed today. This kind of Zionist discourse seems strangely out of tune with the current mood in Israel. There are still a few people who in their own way nobly state the case for the centrality and the importance of ideological considerations in a society like Israel. This not only involves existential problems of security but also those of a national identity slowly being eroded by the post-Zionist climate. Unfortunately, those elements which unite the Jews in Israel, which provide the historical *raison d'être* for Zionism and its historic link with the entire history of the Jewish people – these considerations are not very fashionable right now.

Indeed, scorn is often poured on them from all quarters. There are a few philosophers today like Professor Eli Schweid in Jerusalem, who make the case about how dangerous collective amnesia might be. I think that "normalization," in the sense that you began to describe it, raises a very big question with regard to the coming decades. If indeed, a peace process actually takes root more or less successfully between Israel and all its Arab neighbors, what implications would this have for the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora? For Judaism in Israel and for its Jewish identity? Will we see the revival you seem to be implying of a sort of neo-Canaanite outlook, even if it doesn't necessarily have an overt ideological expression? These are important questions which need to be addressed with new creative thinking, if Zionism is to renew itself in the twenty-first century.

Apropos of the Holy Book and quoting from it, I recall that the late Moshe Dayan (certainly an archetypal Sabra Israeli hero for his time) saw the Bible as absolutely central to his own consciousness. He not only wrote vividly about it, but I think he deeply felt the connection with those places in the land that linked him to a history far older than that of modern Zionism. I feel today this kind of consciousness does not exist within the Israeli political elite, except for a handful of people. You do not have that kind of living secular sense of the Bible. It was still there in the Sabra generation that Dayan represented, but has since receded. This is a significant change.

Then there are the brash statements that one hears more recently, about Israel no longer needing the Diaspora. The terms in which this is couched by some Israelis suggest to me impatience with the old relationship and the desire to go their own way. They seem to be saying, "Okay, we've grown up, we don't need any more handouts, we're a thriving, prosperous state, maybe the Diaspora needs us more than we need them." Beyond that, there may be some deeper problem about Israeli identity and its future orientation that is going to have to be resolved in the next

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few years. A lot will depend, of course, on the new generation that is now coming of age. Many people were surprised by the responses of the younger generation in the days immediately after the assassination. It was rather poignant to visit what is now called Rabin Square in Tel Aviv (where he was assassinated) and see a spontaneous outpouring of identification with the lost leader. What connection could there possibly be between the teenybopper population of today and the tough soldier-politician who embodied the Palmach generation? Rabin was not particularly communicative, and his tastes were far removed from those of Israeli youth. The public certainly respected him and thought he was a straight-dealing politician, but he was not exactly loved, until the assassination turned everything around. Then he became a martyr on the altar of peace. In the eyes of the younger generation, he was suddenly identified with the song of peace. "Yes to peace, no to violence," sung by Rabin, may have sounded rather kitschy, yet it helped create an old-new martyrology. The "sacrifice of Isaac" is a very powerful motif in Jewish culture.

I think this effect is now dissipating, overshadowed by a new cycle of terrorism and violence. What is more difficult to assess are the longer-term trends which may be foreshadowed by the response of Israeli youngsters to Rabin's death. The generation in Israel today which is of army age does not want a return to the old status quo, but it is nevertheless patriotic and also looking for a way out of the impasse.

Three years of military service is a long time. Young people do not want to feel deprived of all the good things in life they perceive their contemporaries in the Western world as enjoying. They want an Israel where such sacrifice will no longer be necessary. The question is not really about their patriotism. We should recall that it was the so-called Coca-Cola generation which fought the Six Day War. It turned out that they knew how to fight when their existence was on the line. I think the same is true today, only the general culture has changed. Israel is now hooked, for good or bad, into the consumer world of mass culture. No one really knows what the effects of this exposure are going to be in the long run. Can Israel continue to remain a special kind of society with a distinctive culture and identity in the face of the products of modern mass culture that it also enjoys? This is an open question.

Question: Do you see any likelihood that the Papacy, the Israelis, and the Arabs are going to work out complicated negotiations about East Jerusalem? It looks to me as if one of the options the Israelis have, conceivably, is to make the Papacy an ally, in order not to lose all control over East Jerusalem.

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Robert Wistrich: I do think that there is a lot of diplomacy going on behind the scenes regarding the Vatican's extensive interests in Jerusalem. I believe you're right that Israel has every reason to look for claimants to the future of the Old City of Jerusalem, other than the PLO. Jordan appeared as one possible alternative, and Israel did what it could to strengthen King Hussein's position. It does not appear to have succeeded. The Vatican might conceivably and inadvertently salvage some Israeli chestnuts for its own reasons. I hear the Pope is intending to visit the Holy Land sometime around the year 2000. Whether this has any connection with what you're suggesting, his visit, if it takes place, would be timed for the new millenium.

This reminds me that we often forget to mention the fate of Arab Christians in the Holy Land. I am not talking about Christian Arabs under Israeli rule but about their condition under the domination of Islam today. With the takeover by the Palestinian Authority of growing parts of the West Bank, there have been disagreeable consequences for the steadily diminishing Christian Arab minority. Anyone who knows Bethlehem would not have been surprised that there was less than universal enthusiasm in the city when the PLO took over. In fact, the future does not look bright for Christians anywhere in the Middle East. No doubt this is something of which the Vatican is aware, though it has traditionally sought an accommodation with Islam. With regard to the status of Jerusalem, I am not sure that Israel has been entirely wise to have delayed resolving the question to the very end of the negotiations. The rationale, of course, is that since this is the thorniest issue of all, you leave it until the very end. But one could also argue that by so doing, once the final negotiations over its status come about, Israel will have already played most of its major cards. Thus it will have a weaker bargaining position than might otherwise have been the case. Israel may be very tempted, in order to finally close the deal, to make imprudent concessions that it would otherwise not have made or had to make.

Question: I have two comments. First, I don't see what is wrong with a politics of fear. I think the world would have been better off if it had adopted such a politics. Carthage would have been much better off if it had pursued a policy of fear towards Rome. The United States would have been better off if there had been a policy of fear toward Korea. In the most important example in our century, if Neville Chamberlain had pursued a policy of fear, we might have been spared or have had a better chance of minimizing a war in which probably a hundred and fifty million people were killed.

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My second comment has to do with the onging canards against Israel. Were you alluding to one when you began your remarks by saying that Israel "dispossessed" the Arabs in the 1948 war? For seventy-five years before that, the Jewish people had been buying up the Arab lands, not taking them by force. The plight of the Arabs from nascent Israel, as I understand it, was due to the Mufti panicking the Arabs and getting them to flee. I don't know of any instance where an Israeli bayonet or bullet was used to get the Arabs out. I think it's wrong to keep repeating these canards.

Robert Wistrich: I'm sorry that I didn't make my point more clearly. When I mentioned the question of the "dispossession" of the Palestinians, I was talking about the current school of Israeli historians who define themselves as post-Zionists and who make this kind of argument. I was not identifying with it, and I certainly would not identify with it in any way. The story of the 1948 War is of course more complicated than the official views that were still accepted in Israel until very recently. We know this from the serious research of some Israeli scholars in the archives now available after thirty years. Of course, there is no equivalent to this kind of access in any Arab country, where no state archives are available at all to any researcher (whether Arab or non-Arab) who deals with contemporary history. Hence there is no way to find out the truth about government policies in the Arab world.

On the other hand, some Israelis have come up with a new version of what happened in 1948 that is very different from the earlier one. Some have used this to bolster or to support a particular ideological or political agenda. They stress the "dispossession" of the Palestinians because they identify more with the losers and the victims. They want to show that Zionism fostered on the Israeli public a series of myths about the heroic war of independence. This view is vigorously resisted by many who regard it as a form of self-flagellation. The people in Israel who see the 1948 victory as an act of historic injustice and dispossession are only a small minority. But it is a point of view that is heard more than in any previous period in Israel that I can recall. That is what I was trying to make clear.

With regard to the politics of fear, again, my point is this: objectively speaking, Likud spokesmen find themselves, in the current pre-elections debates, confronting these questions: What is the Likud offering to the Israeli public beyond what it has already experienced over many years? Does the Likud want to go back to the *intifada* impasse, to return to Gaza and Jericho, to a new state of siege with the Arab world? The Likud tells Israelis that they have to be constantly on their guard; no risk can be taken because we cannot trust any of our Arab neighbors, least of all the

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PLO; Arafat's word, it is said, is worthless; he is nothing but a blood-stained terrorist; he has not changed the covenant, and so on. These arguments may be true, but they are no longer adequate to convince a majority of the Israeli public. What took place with the Oslo I and Oslo II agreements happened despite the rising incidence of terrorism, which many people expected would derail the process. It has not yet had that effect, though Islamic terrorists are trying as hard as they can.

This means that the "politics of fear," a shorthand way of describing the Likud strategy, is not working effectively with regard to the Israeli public. That may change. I'm not saying that there is anything intrinsically wrong with appealing to fear, wherever, as in Israel, it is grounded in a real threat. But Mr. Netanyahu will have to provide something more positive than fear, if he is to win the coming elections. He has in fact moderated his tone and taken a reasonably pragmatic line, but this stance has come a bit late in the day. It may not be enough.

Question: The question I have is one that arises from a comment made by Henry Kissinger a number of years ago, that the thing he most feared in the Middle East was a politics of regionalization, in which the forces of fundamentalism, Israeli and Arab, would join together and create a true change in the Israeli culture. Do you have a comment about that?

Robert Wistrich: I think that this question, which I'm glad you brought up, is looming in the background, casting a shadow over everything. And it will undoubtedly have a bearing on the future. The question of whether or not fundamentalism is the wave of the future or of the past is going to be critical for the outcome on all fronts. It affects Israel domestically and in terms of its foreign policy, as well as the Arab states and the wider world. Obviously, fundamentalism among Muslims is the joker in the pack. Indeed, I would go further. I would guess that this was one of the major reasons why Rabin and Peres made such a revolutionary turn in their attitudes to the PLO and the possibility of a Palestinian state. I think one of the most important considerations for them was the belief that Islamic fundamentalism, driven by Iran, was an extremely dangerous and growing force in the region as a whole. But it was still thought to be containable, if Israel could take advantage of a relatively brief historic moment to push through a comprehensive deal with more moderate Arabs and with the Palestinians. This conceivably could neutralize much of the power of fundamentalism, and create a coalition of interest between Israel and some of the more stable Arab states.

With the PLO at the nadir of its fortunes in 1991, Israel decided to rescue Arafat. It realized that the Gulf War had changed the power bal-

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ance in the region in important ways; the United States was now the sole world power; the Soviet Union had formally ceased to exist. Hence Israel was in a position of relative strength, not only because of such political factors but also thanks to its own military and technological edge. From this perspective, it might be a wise move for the Israeli government, even if serious risks were involved, to preempt and prevent this fundamentalist wave from achieving a momentum that would threaten not only Israel but also the whole Middle East. I think that this has been the overarching strategic assessment, whether it is right or wrong, which influenced both Rabin and Peres.

I don't think we can make a judgment about its success as yet. There is Iran; there is Sudan; there is also Algeria which is very unpredictable. Then there is Egypt, which of course has its own major problem with Muslim extremists and other countries in the region that are by no means immune to Islamic coups. In Israel itself we have the Hamas whose potential for creating havoc is known to us all.

The Israeli government's strategy is a high-risk option but not, I think, an irrational one. And I believe that it has borne some fruits in terms of Israel's international position. So the question of fundamentalism has played a very important role in motivating dramatic changes. Also, I'm sure it has played a part in the American government's involvement in the peace process, which has also been extremely important. The United States has been the pivot both for Israel and the Arabs throughout, and remains the only address when things get difficult, for any kind of peace process to be negotiated. I'm sure that American motivations have also been influenced by larger strategic assessments related to Iran and Islamic fundamentalism. Probably, there is a lot more ambivalence to all this than I can even begin to suggest. Ever since the 1980s, there has been something of a double game going on, played by the United States, Israel, and the Europeans, with regard to Islamic fundamentalism. For example, the Muslim extremists who carried out the World Trade Center bombing in New York were linked with the Afghan guerrillas who had been backed by the C.I.A. to bring down Soviet power in Afghanistan. In the early 1980s, Israel itself nurtured Islamic fundamentalism in Gaza as a means of undermining support for the PLO. Since then much has changed but the terrorism continues.

So these issues are more complex than they sometimes seem. But the combination of endless fundamentalist terrorism and the prospect of an imminent Islamic nuclear bomb is a frightening one, not only for Israel and the more moderate Arabs; it is also a real danger to the West. This would indeed make it crucial to create a new network of relationships in the Middle East that would isolate those forces hostile to peace, whether

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they are states like Iran, Libya, Sudan, or fundamentalist movements like Hezbollah and Hamas, before their destructive potential achieves apocalyptic dimensions. On this effort, the future of Israel and the whole Middle East in the twenty-first century may ultimately depend.

Edith Kurzweil: Thank you, Robert.

MICHIGAN QUARTERLY REVIEW

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KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

The most discussed exhibition of 1996 has been the uptown Guggenheim's *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline.* Not that the show was controversial. Everyone deplored its peculiar inclusions, strange weighting, and conspicuous omissions; the only arguments were about which artists had been slighted and which overemphasized. The curator and author of the exhibition's catalogue, Mark Rosenthal, promised a definitive, comprehensive overview of the course of abstraction from Kandinsky to the present; what he provided was an intellectually dishonest, blatant distortion of the historical record. For example, you'd never have known from Rosenthal's show that there was any Matisse-inspired, color-based postwar abstraction in the United States other than Ellsworth Kelly's, nor guessed at the number of thoughtful painters and sculptors, many with substantial reputations, who are making inventive, probing abstract art today.

Granted, a truly inclusive survey of abstraction is probably impossible to realize as an exhibition: in fact, Rosenthal's catalogue is more comprehensive and better balanced than his show, although it is faintly apologetic, organized strangely, and lacks an index. Granted, too, Frank Lloyd Wright's building, even with the Gwathmey-Siegel additions, is the least accommodating place imaginable for such an exhibition. (Why didn't *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century* spread to the Soho Guggenheim's elegant Isozaki-designed galleries, whose refined, flexible spaces are ideal for large paintings and sculptures?) If Rosenthal had declared: "Here are what I believe to be the half-dozen most significant approaches to abstraction, as exemplified by these half-dozen artists," you'd simply have agreed or disagreed. But as presented, *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century* raised expectations of thoroughness, scholarly probity, and broad vision that it utterly failed to meet. The selections ranged from the first-rate to the inadequate to the bewildering. Some artists were represented in depth, while others were reduced to a single "signature" piece. A series of Agnes Martin's works were installed in tranquil isolation, while a lone Brancusi was plunked on the ramp like an afterthought. (A solitary Dan Flavin, shoved into one of the spiral's bays, looked sadly like a fixture in a lighting store display.) There were inexplicable omissions: Paul Klee, Hans Hofmann, Arshile Gorky, Stuart Davis, Robert Motherwell, Morris

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Louis, and Richard Diebenkorn – to name only a few – not to mention a host of serious, gifted younger practitioners. Why was Yves Klein accorded a miniature solo show, apparently at the expense of most of his European contemporaries? Why include a mediocre picture by Marsden Hartley, a marvelous painter, but one who produced only a handful of quasi-abstractions, and exclude Arthur Dove, who spent a lifetime exploring the possibilities of non-representation, beginning at just about the same time as Kandinsky? Space limitations at the Guggenheim can't be the answer, since Rosenthal found room for two enormous, virtually identical pictures by Gerhardt Richter, an artist who clearly regards abstraction not as an intellectual imperative but as a phenomenon among phenomena; the *appearance* of abstract painting serves Richter as a conceptual base, interchangeable with the newspaper photos and paint color charts that were his sources some years back.

Sculptors fared no better. Rosenthal purported to seriously address issues of abstraction in twentieth-century sculpture with only two David Smiths – one less than compelling – and without a single work by Anthony Caro. Yet there were three pieces by Martin Puryear, an inventive artist but hardly one who, as Smith and Caro did, radically changed our assumptions of what sculpture might be. If Puryear's embrace of alternative materials and his non-constructivist vocabulary were the issue, why were there no sculptures by Richard Deacon? Yet for artists in every medium, inclusion, even inclusion of multiple works, was no guarantee of accurate representation. Only one of De Kooning's superb black and white abstractions of the 1940s was on view, amid a group of his repetitive, undistinguished paintings from the late fifties through the seventies.

The show had an unpleasant subtext of hostility to artists associated with Clement Greenberg. Most were noticeably absent: Hofmann and Louis – as I mentioned earlier – Adolph Gottlieb, Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Larry Poons. Jackson Pollock, represented by a group of spectacular pictures, was a conspicuous exception, with a single, splendid but awkwardly installed Helen Frankenthaler painting from the 1950s presented as a sort of sequel to Pollock: that Frankenthaler has been painting steadily and often brilliantly for the past forty years did not figure in Rosenthal's account.

Rosenthal is not the only curator to assign mature living artists to the past, nor is he alone in judging them solely by the works that first established their reputations and ignoring all subsequent efforts, no matter how potent or exploratory. But his total exclusion of the majority of Frankenthaler's colleagues suggests other than aesthetic motives. In contrast to those obvious gaps, the selection of Frank Stella's works spanned his entire career, from brooding early stripe paintings to a vast, self-

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indulgent extravaganza specially commissioned for the show – but then, Stella was never guilty of provoking Greenberg's enthusiasm. On the other hand, Greenberg's well-known admiration for Larry Poons may explain why none of his early, shimmering "lozenge" paintings were on view at the Guggenheim, despite their being acknowledged as extremely important and representative of their period.

None of Poons's later pictures were on view, either. Yet his recent works, seen this winter at Salander-O'Reilly, were remarkable, a series of confrontational, edgy canvases that made eloquent dramas out of the conflict between deliberately placed inclusions, emphatic brushmarks, and explosive runs of paint. A large horizontal, off-pink picture, at once brutal and lyrical, had the declarativeness and authority of a great late Braque and, at the same time, seemed completely unprecedented – to address, in fact, new notions of what abstraction could be. Poons is only one of countless innovative artists, present and past, erased from Rosenthal's version of the history of abstraction. It's enraging that this perverse recounting will probably be taken as truth. Worse, the realities of the museum world being what they are, this woefully inadequate, inaccurate show will probably be the last word on the subject for years to come.

A wholly different model of meticulous scholarship and lavish presentation of visual evidence for a thesis was provided by William Rubin's *Picasso and Portraiture*, at the Museum of Modern Art. The show included some fine unfamiliar pictures, some illuminating groupings, and one astonishing plaster relief, never seen before in this country, but there were few surprises. Picasso's protean ability to invent visual languages is a given, as is his restless flipping through a personal lexicon of those languages over the decades; not unexpectedly, the show simply confirmed the way exploration and discovery degenerated into manner, and sometimes – rarely – back again, over the course of the painter's lifetime. That Picasso's emotional response to his subject matter could provoke many different kinds of forms and images, sometime sequentially and sometimes simultaneously, was demonstrated dramatically by the side by side hanging of a pair of twin canvases of identically posed reclining women, painted the same day, almost certainly from memory. One was obviously "of" – or more accurately – "about" the intense, dark-haired Dora Maar, the other "about" her predecessor, the pneumatic, blonde Marie-Thérèse Walter. Yet the polar differences of form, touch, drawing, and color in the two pictures, Rubin suggests, cannot be explained solely by the physical differences between the two women; rather they bear witness to Picasso's using the act of painting as a kind of self-discovery.

"Self" is the operative word. Picasso's ego is more often evoked by his formal inventions than the appearance or character of the person rep-

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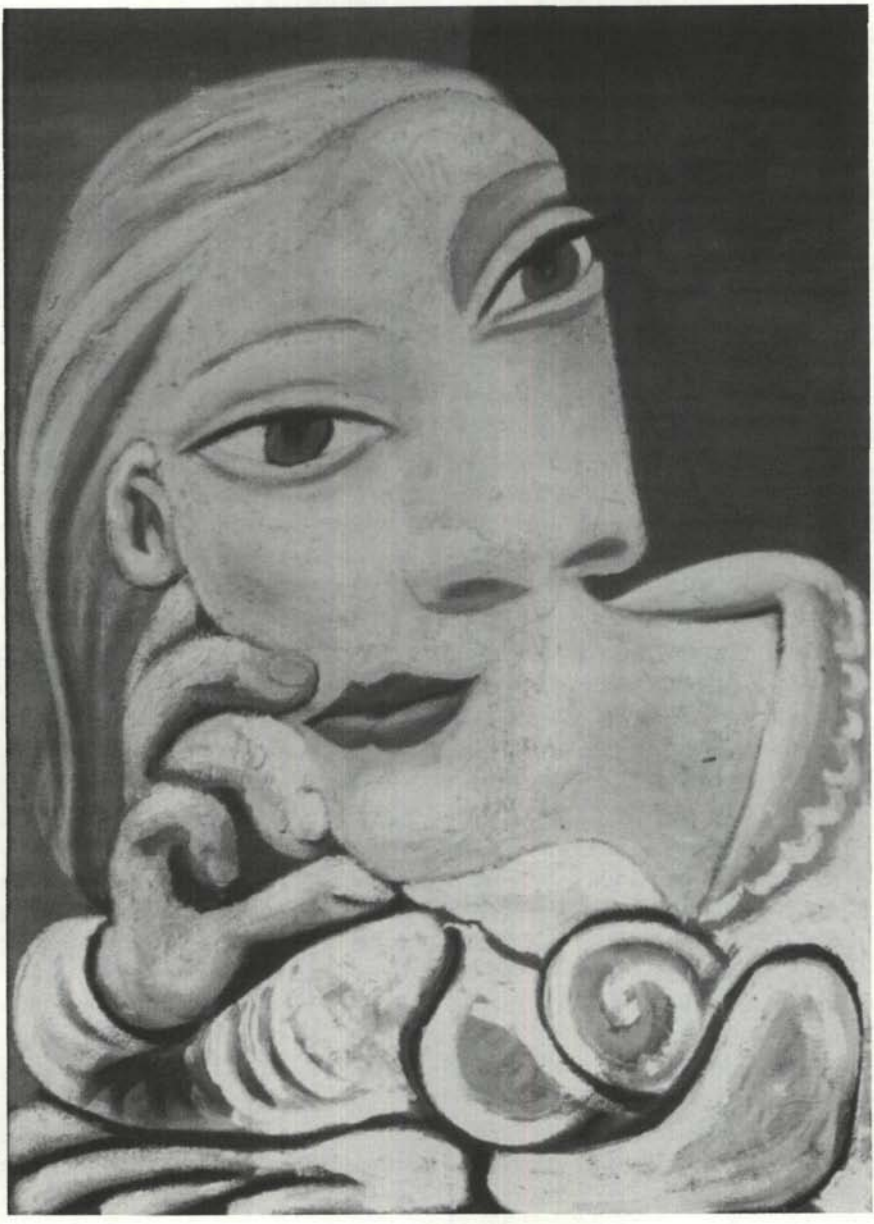

Marie-Thérèse Leaning on One Elbow (1939) by Pablo Picasso. Oil on Canvas. Private Collection. Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art.

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resented – particularly when that person is female. With few exceptions – an achingly tender drawing of Marie-Thérèse – Picasso's most powerful portraits of women are shamanistic acts of possession. Sometimes rage, respect, or oddly, nervousness declares itself. (A perceptive British sculptor with whom I visited the show was sure that Picasso was terrified of his wife, Olga Khokhlova, given the rigidity and caution with which he depicted her.)

The exhibition's relatively few male portraits were often more rigorous and arresting than even the most sensuous of the female images, again with a few exceptions, such as the early, brilliant improvisations on Fernande Olivier's distinctive looks and the evocations of Marie-Thérèse voluptuously abandoned in sleep. I'm thinking of the iconic, keenly observed drawings of Apollinaire and Stravinsky, and (one of the stars of the show), a head of Max Jacob, an early study for *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, a brutal, direct evocation of a high forehead and lean, intelligent, *particular* face, with a few slashing strokes. (Given its toughness, power, and distance, the famous image of Gertude Stein must be considered a male portrait.) And there are self-portraits: Picasso as dandy, as eternal mask, and finally, the show's searing climax, as a haunted and haunting death's head.

But in a real sense, *all* of Picasso's images are self-portraits, no matter what their nominal subject, no matter whether it is animate or inanimate. Perhaps the cumulative effect of the "declared" images of the artist is so powerful because the great artificer had no need to pretend that he was addressing anything but his preferred theme. Yet the most arresting work in the show was a plaster female head, constructed with the swollen volumes that signal Marie-Thérèse. The sculpture is not so much a relief as a robust free-standing portrait somehow turned inside out and wrenched onto a rectangular surface, without losing any of its vigorous articulation.

Elsewhere last season, the coincidental overlapping of a group of diverse sculpture shows made for interesting comparisons. Mia Westerlund-Roosen's new work at Lennon-Weinberg Gallery translated her recent excavated outdoor pieces into architectural, domestic terms. My favorite was a suavely curved white wall that revealed – or was split by – a tightly gathered "curtain" of creamy cloth and knotted, ravelled cords. There's always a sly, tongue-in-cheek feminist undercurrent in Westerlund-Roosen's sculpture and in her recent work, seductive body part metaphors declared themselves momentarily and then merged with other, multivalent readings. A propped tower of lacy, swelling discs recalled the artist's earlier "American Beauties" series, transformed by new associa-

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Peel (1995) by Mia Westerlund Roosen. Flannel, resin, and paint. 5 and 1/2 feet by 6 feet by 4 and 1/2 feet. Courtesy of Lennon, Weinberg Inc.

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tions; the piece managed to evoke the lingerie of the 1950s and the antebellum South, fragile blossoms, and a good many more fleshly images, all without compromising its presence as a precariously balanced, physically absorbing object.

A similar ambiguity, although very different in mood, prevailed in William Tucker's show of recent work at David McKee Gallery. Tucker seems to aspire to reveal the essence of figurative sculpture – an uneasy coexistence of the primordial lump and the body – coaxing inert accumulations of matter into expressive masses with a vigorous hand. Sometimes, he tests how much the lump can be allowed to dominate before the concept of willed sculptural form disappears, while at others, he appears to colonize the outer limits of allusive reference, making a single articulate form simultaneously call up an entire torso and a whole lexicon of limbs and joints. Among Tucker's recent works, many of the smaller, "life-size" sculptures achieved an extraordinary balance between these extremes; primal volumes eloquently resolved themselves into tense, fleeting glimpses of body fragments, like echoes of Rodin's truncated *Figure volante* or the startling mid-section of his *Iris,* with her wide-flung legs. (Tucker's perceptive writings on Rodin reveal a good deal about his own endeavors.) The pale, agitated surfaces of the recent plasters, as opposed to the recent bronzes (or bronze patinated plasters) heightened the sense of the hand that conjured up their eloquent forms.

I wish that I had liked Nancy Graves's spring show at Knoedler, especially since it was the first in New York since the tragic death of this gifted artist, but I found the sculptures – amalgams, according to a gallery informatation sheet, of "natural" and "cultural" objects – extremely problematic. Graves had a gallimaufry of raw material cast in bronze and elaborately patinated – everything from baseball bats to fragmented classical heads to heliconia flowers to indescribable expressions of pure kitsch – and used these unlikely elements to construct modestly scaled sculptures. But where the similarly transubstantiated tropical leaves and fronds of Graves's earlier sculptures read as witty, wholly unreal parodic plants, the more recent works never became convincing wholes. Structural invention never subsumed the identity of the laboriously accumulated parts, so that while you felt that you ought to admire Graves's cleverness in assembling all the bits – and in having had it all cast in the first place – you were not engaged by a new expressive object that slowly disclosed the origins of its components.

A quartet of painters – a young British woman who lives in the north of England, a mature Englishman who divides his time between Spain and Brooklyn, and two Americans – offered exhibitions worth noting this spring. Roxy Walsh's "Wish You Were Beautiful," at Annika Sundvik

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Mulligan's House (1996) by Kevin Wixted. Acrylic, enamel on canvas. 84 inches by 60 inches. Courtesy of David Beitzel Gallery.

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Gallery, consisted of postcard-sized paintings, like messages sent from an imaginary journey, a voyage, perhaps, to a state of mind. The charm of these intimate little pictures, however, had more to do with their qualities as paintings than with any presumed literary intentions. Delicate checkerboarding, half-glimpsed landscape references, and meticulously drawn letters and words, all rendered in radiant, washy color, suggested that Walsh had looked hard and profitably at Paul Klee. Whatever their origins, her tiny paintings were enchanting – the best of Walsh's work that I've seen.

The most compelling works shown by the expatriate Englishman, Jim Bird, at Joan Prats Gallery, were a series of books, boxed unbound leaves of ravishing handmade paper on which Bird's wristy, fluent drawing and edgy pools of primary color shared space with exquisitely lettered poems by writers he admires. The elegantly made books are simply beautiful objects, provocative to read, and a delight to examine. Bird has long invested a great deal of his energy and emotion in works on paper, so much so that they've often been among his most accomplished efforts. The formal, intimate book format with its forced sequences and repetitive rhythms, provides Bird with an extremely sympathetic context for his talents; the verbal imagery in the poems adds bracing counterpoint.

I had never seen a group of Kevin Wixted's works before his recent show at David Beitzel Gallery, but I look forward to the next opportunity to do so. Wixted plays repetitive "stabbing" and spotting of his canvas with a loaded brush against vaguely architectural, geometric compositions, subverting the latter's illusionistic implications with the former's forthright assertion of the artifice of painting. The pictures I liked best had large-scale marks and a relatively simply "armature," suggestive of the "column and drape" balcony settings beloved of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century portrait painters. Some of Wixted's more complicated efforts, densely populated with small dots and strokes, seemed overloaded in comparison to the best of his more economical pictures, but his quirky color sense came close to redeeming even the paintings I liked least – a range of muted, slightly dissonant hues that seemed wholly his own. I look forward to his next show.

For some time, Claire Seidl has been showing serious, well-crafted, energetic canvases that have consistently rewarded attention. Good as many of these earlier pictures were, however, her new large-scale, near-monochrome paintings at Rosenberg and Kaufman Fine Art were more ambitious, more complex, and better than anything I'd seen of hers before. (They also surpassed the smaller, more tightly packed canvases in the exhibition.) Scaling up liberates Seidl's drawing and makes her paintings breathe. Her coiled, scribbled skeins of paint seem to unravel as you

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From "Wish You Were Beautiful" (1995-96) by Roxy Walsh. Watercolor on gesso panel. 5 and 1/2 inches by 3 and 1/2 inches. Courtesy of Annika Sundvik Gallery.

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watch, their dense opacities fraying into transparency. As in the past, there are hints of landscape space in the large pictures, but what seems most important is not allusion but mood. Seidl's paintings are at once brooding and exuberant, as though they emobodied both her pleausre in the act of putting paint on a surface and her anxiety about letting her unstable images uncoil from the end of her painting tool – an abstract metaphor for the thoughtful artist's simultaneous confidence and doubt about what she is up to.

Two of the most absorbing shows of the past season required travel, although "show" is something of a misnomer for Katja Jacobs's month-long, cumulative installation-cum-meditation in the exhibition space at Visual Arts Ontario in Toronto. For about five years, Jacobs has worked with themes of memory, loss, and retrieval, inventing visual metaphors for her peripatic history, a saga of having changed countries, languages, and cultures numerous times, both by choice and by compulsion. Her paintings are layered, collaged, written on, and on occasion, "wounded" and "healed." She often incorporates family images and (usually illegible) texts, obscuring these inclusions by overpainting and then re-excavating the buried portions. While the results are rich and satisfying, it's clear that she finds process to be as important as product.

The Toronto installation was dedicated to Jacobs's eldest son, who died suddenly last winter. A palimpsest of texts, messages, and wax-coated "packages," affixed to the walls with long light-catching, silvery upholstery pins, the piece demanded that you move between a pair of tables, their surfaces overwritten with smudged, repeated phrases, like incantations made visible but not quite intelligible, bearing pots of sprouting wheat. Such pots, *le blé de Noel,* are a common sight around Christmastime in Marseille, where Jacobs has spent a good deal of time recently. Vestiges of an ancient solstice ritual, they function, in Jacobs's piece, as serious puns, comforting symbols of rebirth and hope.

For anyone who thinks of Andrew Forge chiefly in terms of his influential teaching or his penetrating, illuminating art criticism, his painting retrospective at the Center for British Art at Yale University, through mid-July, will come as a surprise. What is really surprising, however, given the power and excellence of Forge's pictures, is that this is his first museum exhibition. It is cerebral, demanding, and ravishingly beautiful. The show begins with pictures made before Forge left his native England for the United States, a group of cool, solidly constructed nudes which seem at once to be products of dispassionate obseration and homages to Courbet's thickset, fleshy women. There's a ten-year gap and then the real substance of the show: shifting, elusive accumulations of apparently dispassionate marks that slowly organize themselves into powerful evoca-

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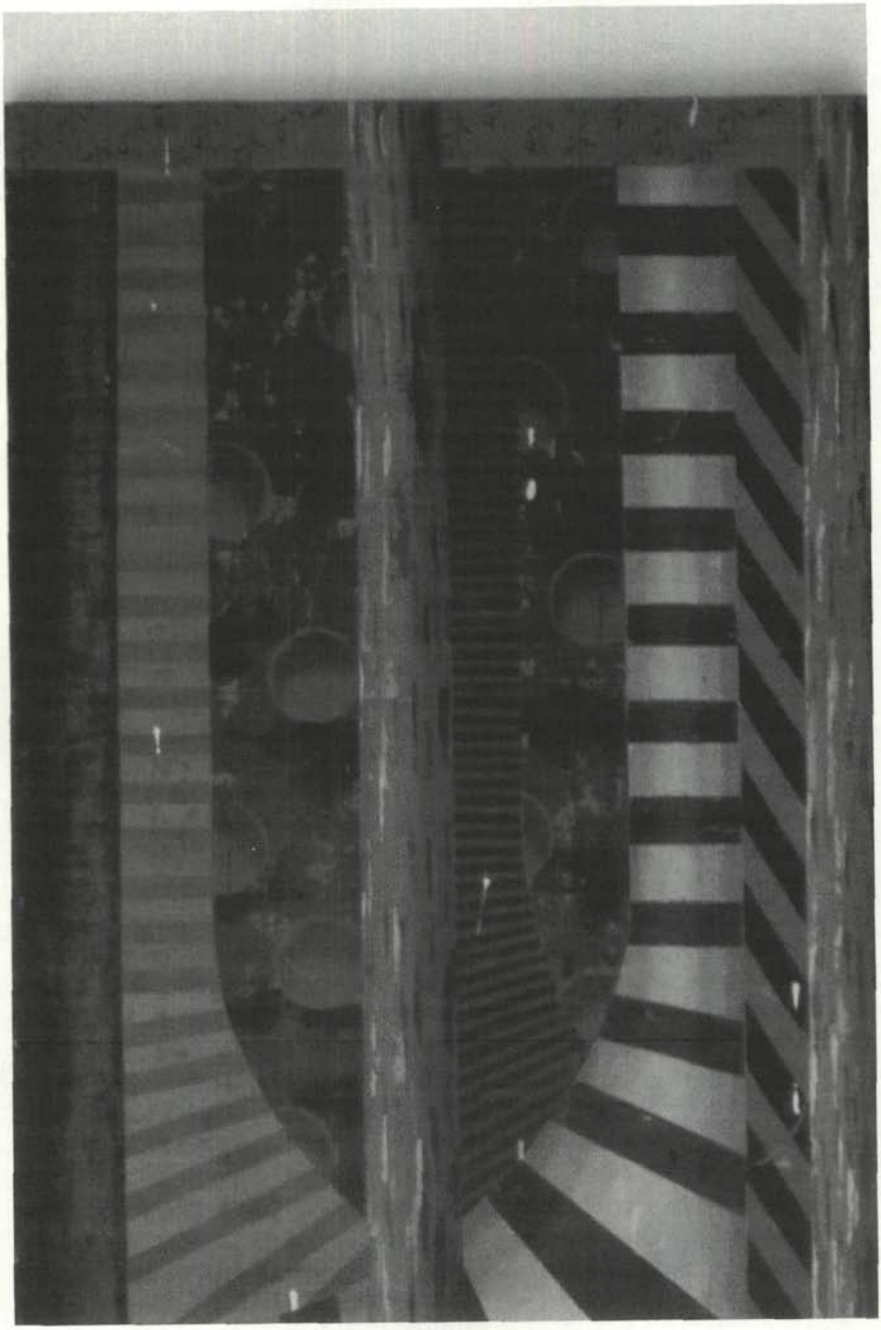

Cybele (1994) by William Tucker. Bronze. 33 inches by 41 and 1/2 inches by 34 inches. Courtesy of McKee Gallery.

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tions of light, space, time of day, season, and more, declaring Forge to be a master of nuance, a poet of implication. Forge says his pictures take a long time to make. They also take a long time to reveal themselves, but they reward the effort.

If you take the time to let your eye adjust and become more sensitive, an expanse of spotted and dotted grays, for example, gradually will become a flicker of richly varied, unnameable hues that gather themselves into fairly discrete but unstable zones, suggesting images without describing them. The most significant incidents seem to happen just outside of your field of vision and slide away when you try to focus on them, like things seen at night; the whole, in some of the best pictures, frays off at the edges. Forge's painting are not at all optical games, though. They are at once wholly self-sufficient and intimately bound up with perception, completely "real" and altogether dependent upon our experience of the world. Yet they seem so much about a state of becoming, so much, paradoxically, about both the disembodied act of seeing and the physical act of transferring material to a surface, that it is difficult to decide whether the evoked reality is that of our surroundings or of painting itself.

Coda

Toy Garden, which was performed at La Mama by members of Duke University's department of dance, is Kikuo Saito's first theater-dance piece since he stopped working with Robert Wilson and Peter Brooke (among others) to devote himself to painting. A kind of daydream inspired by Carpaccio's celebrated, cropped painting of women on a roof terrace, the piece unfolded slowly in a series of sparse stage-pictures, in turn tender, poetic, playful. Saito describes his narrative as about what is happening on the missing side of the painting, which in his view includes nineteenth-century tourists, chatty Renaissance courtesans, a tailor, a burning house, a woman with a skirt full of doves, and an entrancing iguana. It's as though Carpaccio's imagery was shifted, dislocated, the way that ordinary things seen during the day are transformed in dreams. Imaginative costumes by Catalina Arocena and choreography by Eva Maier were integral to the piece, but the flavor of amused melancholy seemed very close to that of Saito's delicate, moody paintings.

Stanley Boxer's show of recent large canvases at Salander-O'Reilly Gallery coincided with his seventieth birthday. It included some of Boxer's best work to date: a couple of dark, dragged vertical pictures and a strange, deadpan orange painting that seemed both impenetrable and molten. Many happy returns, Stanley, and many more paintings as good as these.

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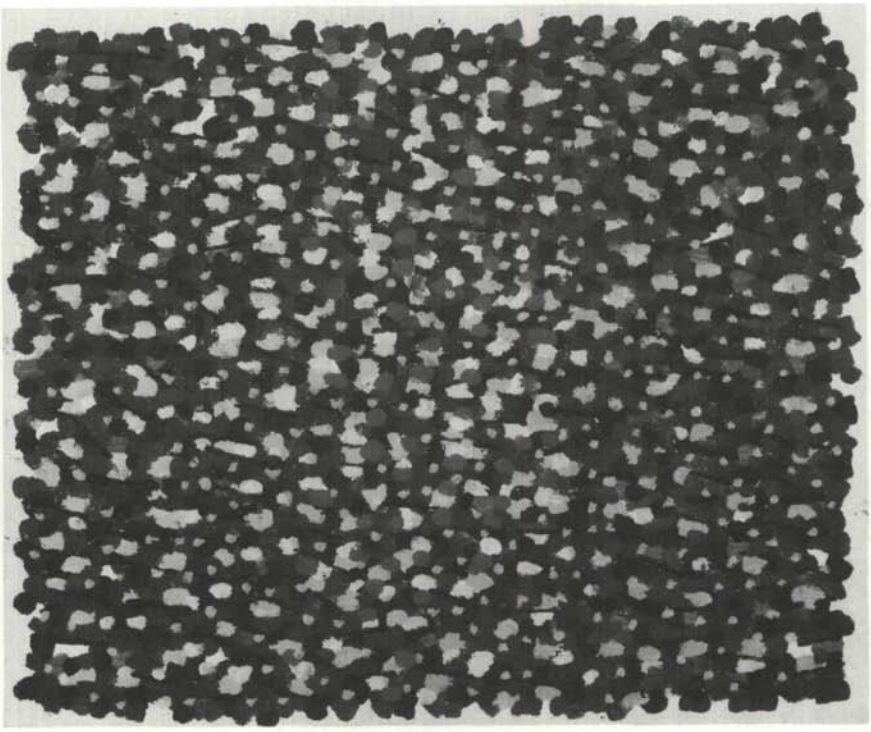

Study: Forest by Andrew Forge. Oil on canvas. 12 inches by 14 inches. Courtesy of Yale Center for British Art.

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ALAN WOLFE

The Culture of Cultural Studies

"Cultural studies" is the latest wave to wash over humanities departments in the United States, following French literary theory and the new historicism. Inspired mostly by British writers such as Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, and Stuart Hall, cultural studies examines the ways popular culture shapes ordinary people's perceptions of the world – and how it provides tools of "resistance" against the hierarchies of advanced capitalism. Although borrowing from its own coterie of Continental thinkers, especially Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault – let alone the theorists of the Frankfurt School – compared to the deterministic logic of poststructuralism, cultural studies is refreshingly humanistic. It is less pompous and can, at times, even display a sense of humor, and it recognizes the importance of writing in ways accessible to the uninitiated.

The rise of cultural studies is a reaction among the politically engaged against the defeatism inherent in post-structuralism. The practitioners of high theory within the academic left tend to be elitists; unabashed careerists, they gravitate toward academic professionalism and rarefied speculation. By contrast, cultural studies advocates are populists, ensconced in the less prestigious universities and committed not to the didactic seminar, but to the explicit politicization of the classroom. The typical academic task of the one is to read a single text, usually a written one, deeply and intensively, while for the other it is to jump from one (often visual) text to another, making startling, if not always sensible, connections between them. If deconstructionists and other high theorists find allies in departments of philosophy, cultural studies reaches out to sociology, anthropology, film studies, communication, and schools of education. For the former, multiculturalism was primarily epistemological, rooted in a theory about the perspective of the other; for the latter, multiculturalism is more like the ethnically-balanced slate of a political machine. Cultural studies enthusiasts more likely to write about rap music, Malcolm X or Nike commercials than to comment on de Man or Heidegger.

There is a missing generation in cultural studies. Some of its prominent representatives, such as Stanley Aronowitz, were political activists in the 1960s, or even earlier. Others are much younger: Andrew Ross and Michael Bérubé were children when Berkeley erupted. Cultural studies

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combines those who never lost their taste for Marxism with those for whom Marxism remained doubly-forbidden fruit: frowned upon by the culture as a whole and by academic leftists more attracted to theory than to political commitment. Revised to make race and gender coequal with class as categories of oppression, cultural studies engages itself with the twenty-first century in culture while upholding the nineteenth century in politics. Its ideal of a cultural product is science fiction or cyberspace, while its ideal of a political concept is the class struggle or Gramsci's notion of hegemony.

One does not generally find in cultural studies tortuous efforts to justify the impossibility of justification, as one does in postmodernism and its various offshoots. For this reason alone, its lack of philosophical pretension is an advantage; it rarely claims to be anything other than an effort to keep "progressive" politics alive among faculty and students. But the self-conscious Marxism of cultural studies is also an oddity in a post-Marxist world. Cultural studies is significant, not because of its critique of popular culture, but because it so readily accepts, and celebrates, popular culture. In so doing, cultural studies brings to a close an era in which intellectuals felt a responsibility to serve as the opposition party to capitalism in lieu of a working class which chose to shun the job.

Cultural studies is haunted by the ghosts of the anti-Stalinist intellectuals of the thirties, forties, and fifties. They, too, felt a tension between their political and their cultural commitments, one that was eventually resolved when their taste for high culture weakened to the point of non-existence their inclinations to Marxism. Cultural studies stands this choice on its head: Marxism will be kept alive by praising the achievements of what used to be called mass society. Although the anti-Stalinists were accused by later generations of having accommodated themselves to capitalism, their cultural predispositions retained a radical edge: one could always distance oneself from the ephemeral commodities of the market by appealing to a higher aesthetic standard.

Cultural studies, while politically radical, offers no cultural vantage point from which capitalism can be criticized: its praise of mass culture thus becomes an apology for the very capitalism against which its favored constituents are presumed to be struggling. Cultural studies finally comes to speak for no agent other than the academics who are speaking. And they, in turn, have nothing critical to say. Inspired by opposition to the political disengagement of high theory, cultural studies demonstrates the inevitable political disengagement of low practice. Between the mandarins of deconstruction and the populists of cultural studies, the humanities in America, dominated by leftists, contains remarkably little leftism.

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The intellectuals of the cold war may have had their failings, but among them was not self-hatred. Intellectuals were defined by their respect for intellect. The one intellectual usually faulted for his ready enthusiasm to join in attacks on American society, Dwight Macdonald, was second to none in his distaste for the culture produced by non-intellectuals. (He knew, having worked for them.) Underneath the increasingly tenuous commitment to socialism on the part of these intellectuals was a nightmare worse than capitalism: a society in which the masses would have no respect for the life of the mind.

Cultural studies takes as its premise not the culture's lack of respect for intellectuality but intellectuality's lack of respect for the culture. Cold War intellectuals may have moved away from the "neo-aristocratic critique of mass culture" associated with Eliot or Ortega, Andrew Ross writes, but they nonetheless retained a strong fear that the popular culture "would lend itself to ever greater forms of social control and an increasing monopolization of all channels of opinion and information." This one-sided view, Ross continues, overlooks the "resentments born of subordination and exclusion" usually embodied in the products of popular culture. There is no secret why intellectuals make this mistake; they like the world to be rational and purposeful. The popular, by contrast, "is perhaps the one field in which intellectuals are least likely to be experts."

Respect for the culture inevitably brings with it a certain disrespect for the mind. This is not only acceptable, it can even be an advantage. The left must, above all else, be popular, writes Bérubé: "a preachy left that situates itself safely above stupid, reactionary movies and their stupid, reactionary meanings, can be – and has been – very easily lampooned as a 'politically correct' left of somber, humorless moralizers." Andrew Ross is even more explicit in attempting to reposition the left's attitude toward the stupid. A new generation of left-wing intellectuals faces a new, and contradictory, task: "encouraging resistance to the privileges of 'smartness'," even if in so doing "they find themselves lined up against the order of cultural capital which is the basis of their own authority as contestants in the social world."

In this campaign against smartness, nothing is too dumb for cultural studies. Romance novels, *Star Trek*, heavy metal, Disneyland, punk rock, wrestling, Malcolm X, *Dallas* – the enterprise is premised upon demonstrating that anything the cultural elite despises is potentially subversive. "Roll Over Beethoven" is the anthem; whatever the literati once denounced, cultural studies will uphold. If the Rosenberg letters represented for Leslie Fiedler and Robert Worshaw an irresistible combination of Marxist clichés and cultural kitsch, then it is important to stress, as Andrew Ross does, that these letters "challenge the assumption that effective

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political statements cannot be communicated in a language that lacks the ring of posterity, and therefore that political sentiments, to be persuasive, require trained intellects or populist rhetoricians." If shopping centers were for an earlier generation of Marxists symbols of the fetishism of commodities, then contemporary advocates of cultural studies, such as Meaghan Morris, find them "overwhelmingly and constitutively paradoxical," embodying uniformity on the one hand and, on the other, a tendency to "dissolve at any one point into a fluidity and indeterminacy that might suit any philosopher's delirium of an abstract femininity . . ." If Rambo can be seen as little more than a money-maker, he also represents, argues William Warner, the vulnerability of the American male at a time when masculinity is being brought into question; besides, as Douglas Kellner writes, he has "long hair, a head-band, eats only natural foods . . . is close to nature, and is hostile toward bureaucracy, the state, and technology . . ."

Enthusiasts for cultural studies are the first to admit that popular culture is not always pretty; its images can be violent, pornographic, racist, and militarist, doing real harm to real people. But popularity must be respected for its own sake; if a product sells, there must be something to it. There is, in this sympathy for the popular, an element of realism; unlike some feminists against pornography, who simply want to wish away an ugliness they do not like (and who, according to Ross, therefore sound like the Cold War intellectuals of a previous generation), writers in the tradition of cultural studies are more likely to try and discover why pornography has appeal – and not just to men.

Doing this, however, often requires rather complicated gymnastics. And, truth be told, cultural studies stumbled badly. To claim, as endless writers in this tradition do, that Madonna serves feminist goals by challenging the border between masculine and feminine represents little more than celebrity envy. It is a short step from that position to sympathy for sado-masochism or even the argument of Shannon Bell, who finds that feminist critics of prostitution, the ultimate form of women's degradation, silence prostitutes by insisting on a difference between licit and illicit sex.

Perhaps the most painful example of the inability of cultural studies to deal with ugliness is bell hook's treatment of "gangsta rap." Feminists must be "bold and fierce" in their condemnation of black rapsters who preach violence against women, she claims. But we should also recognize that the white power structure has an interest in having black music "stir up controversy to appeal to audiences." Gangsta rappers are just dupes of the machinations of white elites. Therefore, as hooks inelegantly concludes, "our feminist critiques of black male sexism fail as meaningful political interventions if they seek to demonize black males, and do not

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recognize that our revolutionary work is to transform white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in the multiple arenas of our lives where it is manifest, whether in gangsta rap, the black church, or in the Clinton administration."

Agonies such as these are a product of cultural studies' certainty that the popular culture is popular. But how do we know that it is? The mere fact that people buy something does not mean that they like it or even use it. The sociology of the popular is terra incognita; since the days of Paul Lazarsfeld, sociologists have been trying to understand the phenomenon of the mass audience, with little success. But cultural studies enthusiasts, unrestrained by a sociologist's need for data, spin imaginative interpretations of what *Hustler* magazine or AIDS iconography mean to those who read or see them. If we only knew. The fact is that there is as little basis for concluding that popular culture is a source of resistance to the dominant order as there is for believing that it is a prop of the dominant order. Cultural studies happens when literature professors wander into the territory of sociologists without a map.

For this very reason, cultural studies also takes the popularity of popular culture far more seriously than the purveyors of popular culture do. Those who write soap operas and market punk rock are guided by little else than their relentless quest for something that will turn a profit. Postmodernists in their own fashion, they operate by no core principles and subscribe to no theories of human nature or the proper organization of society. They would be the first to recognize that there is no message in their message, other than half-hearted efforts at product differentiation. They can never be sure that their contributions to popular culture will ever make it past the wastebasket and into the video stores. When their products are successful, they usually have little idea why. If they were interested, and they generally are not, they could consult advocates of cultural studies, who are busy trying to supply a meaning and rationale for their work which they themselves do not possess.

Cultural studies thus operates as a vanguard party for the media elite. In Australia, where cultural studies flourishes, its enthusiasts, no longer able to find work in the university, are, according to Meaghan Morris, "virtually forced to work in the media or in the bureaucracy or increasingly in the private sector . . ." No such corresponding shift in occupational affiliations has happened in the United States, but the day may well come. "A media-conscious left, a left that knows how social signs can be appropriated and reappropriated, may be capable of deliberately wrestling cultural meanings away from the New Right on its own ground," writes Bérubé. Why wait? Cultural studies can begin right now to present itself in media-like fashion: its books, sound-byte scholarship,

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tend to be collections of smaller articles rather than sustained arguments; its titles are meant to grab attention ("Pop Goes the Academy: Cult Studs Fight the Power"); its language strives for, even if it often fails to accomplish, inside-dopesterism; its conferences are usually packed and feature the academic equivalent of rock stars; illustrations are favored and books are packaged brilliantly; and the treatment of what is under investigation resembles fan magazines more than disinterested inquiry. This is not an effort to study the mass media but to imitate it.

Because work in the media resembles, even if superficially, the work of intellectuals and academics, there has long been both an attraction and a repulsion between these two vocations. But whereas Dwight Macdonald and Daniel Bell left the world of Luce either for independent writing or the academy, cultural studies strives to transform the academy into a mass market production. Intellectuals, Andrew Ross writes, are those who "patrol the ever-shifting borders of popular and legitimate taste, who supervise the passports, the temporary visas, the cultural identities, the threatening 'alien' elements, and the deportation orders, and who occasionally make their own adventurist forays across the border." Cultural studies strives for something even more ambitious than an occasional venture into enemy territory. Marxists thought that one class could abolish all classes; the intellectuals of cultural studies want to see a world in which intellectuals no longer exist. This is self-hatred with a vengeance.

One might think that American society has already brought into existence a world in which intellectuals no longer exist. It is not necessary to wax nostalgic for a golden age of intellectuals to recognize that today's critics have neither the learning nor the audience of a previous generation. One member of that earlier generation, Richard Hofstadter, went out of his way to remind us that this has never been a country particularly attracted to intellectual ideas. But anti-intellectualism, in Hofstadter's treatment, was especially a movement of the right. No doubt he would be as surprised as anyone to find a decided anti-intellectualism stemming from the academic left.

Cultural studies approaches the debate over political correctness by stripping it of any content, conceiving it a problem of rhetoric, strategy, and image. The right does a better job making its points stick, adherents to this trend believe, not because its critique is accurate, but because the right is unified and never concedes a point. The left fails in its strategy because it doesn't understand that the right plays by hardball rules which are uncomfortable to well-meaning leftists; the right lies, for example, while the left does not. It therefore all comes down to image: the left simply has to do a better job explaining its position. This kind of analysis is unpersuasive because it ignores reality: there really was an effort to turn English

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Composition at the University of Texas into a discussion of racial discrimination, and a professor at the University of New Hampshire really was brought up on charges of sexual harassment for a comment made in the classroom. But that is only part of its weakness. The major paradox in the cultural studies' defense against the critiques of political correctness is this: in embracing popular culture so enthusiastically, how can cultural studies defend an institution such as the university which exists, at least in theory, to promote the life of the mind?

What might seem like a contradiction resolves itself when one examines the ways in which cultural studies makes its defense. Bérubé, who argues that the left is ill-advised to defend an intelligent high culture against a popular low culture, turns around and accuses the right of anti-intellectualism because it is scornful of cutting-edge literary theory. Yet it is surely an odd sensibility that elevates academic writing as better embodying the life of the mind than, for example, the poetry of Eliot or Pound. Paul Lauter writes that "it is because I have a certain faith in the value of intellectual work and in the academy that I have helped begin an organization called – perversely it seems to some – the Union of Democratic Intellectuals." But, it turns out, that even this "certain" faith is compromised; for him, intellectual work "does not cease with the final footnote. It takes us into communities, into politics; into organizing, in short." Through arguments like these, what might have been a contradiction becomes no contradiction at all; cultural studies' defense of higher learning is not a defense of intelligence, but of academic scholasticism on the one hand and political organizing on the other. It is precisely because such unintelligent things go on in universities that a movement such as cultural studies, which prizes the low and dumb, can support them so enthusiastically.

One of the most controversial ideas offered by an earlier generation of intellectuals was the notion that Western societies had reached "an end of ideology." For a 1960s radical like myself, the idea was ludicrous. Look around, we said to each other in 1968, ideology is everywhere. The failure of our elders to notice was proof positive that they had resigned themselves to neoconservatism. To this day, I remain uncertain whether "the end of ideology" is or is not a reality, let alone a good thing. Advocates of cultural studies do not share my ambivalence; for them, the end of ideology has taken place and we ought to welcome its arrival. "The mantle of opposition no longer rests upon the shoulders of an autonomous avant-garde," Andrew Ross writes in language resonant of the 1950s. "Neither the elite metropolitan intellectuals who formed the traditional corpus of public tastemakers or opinionmakers; nor the romantic neo-bohemians who shaped the heroic Nietzschean image of the unat-

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tached dissenter. . . nor the organic party cadres whom Lenin shaped after the model of the 'professional revolutionary'," Ross continues, can serve as a force of resistance to advanced capitalism. Echoing Daniel Bell, Ross finds hope only in one place: "it has been scientific intellectuals rather than humanists who have been at the forefront of this professional activism."

There is no reason, according to Ross, to lament the end of ideology and, with it, the passing of what he calls "the universal intellectual." Future contestations will be over the body, not the mind, and the new politics of identity – especially movements organized around gays, women, and blacks – are primarily bodily in nature. Academics, under such conditions, are best off jettisoning their obsolete beliefs in detachment and the possibilities of pristine knowledge and joining the action. Even the vanguard party must go; indeed, as Michael Bérubé writes, so will most of the elements of classic Marxism, leaving only "sugar-free, low-cholesterol, no-fat decaffeinated Marxism lite . . ." But cultural studies is fooling itself. Popular culture has little place for intellectuals, even intellectuals who lionize popular culture. It was tragic of classic Marxists to believe that they could ride the backs of the working class to power. The notion that teachers of literature can ride the backs of comic book readers to power is farcical.

Conservatives will have a field day when they discover the cultural studies boom, but I hope they recognize how profoundly conservative cultural studies really is. Intellectuals have only one way of influencing the direction their society takes: by using their brains to understand how we have become the society we are. Any intellectual movement which denigrates brains denigrates its own influence. Cultural studies announces what has been obvious for some time: the American left, having become quite comfortable in its resignation from responsibility, would rather join the culture than fight it.

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Amos Oz

Don't Call It Night

Was she really always correct in her lightning judgments? Or more times than not? Sometimes? I couldn't check any more, because with time I began to see people through her eyes: icy, warm, tepid, generous, villainous, compassionate. How about me? Am I hot or cold, Noa? Or would I be better off not asking? To which she replied instantly, unhesitatingly: You're warm but getting colder. Never mind, I'll warm you up. And she added: Not bad. A bit domineering. You drive the Jeep brilliantly – it's not so much driving, more like a rodeo.

And sometimes she looked to me again just the way she looked the first time we met, at the Embassy, an energetic, well-meaning, judgmental Israeli schoolteacher. Her beauty was written all over in capital letters. Wafting all around her a faint but unmistakable scent of honeysuckle. But I found nothing repellent in all of this. On the contrary, there were times when her presence filled me with childlike excitement, like a creature that has been indoors and from now on is going to be well looked after. I gradually discovered how fine and how effortless was her emotional range, maternal one moment, girlish the next, seductive, and most of the time sisterly. What's more, she revealed to me a childlike sense of humor; "the horse is the main protagonist in the history of the Latin peoples," a humor that gave me a strange urge to cover her shoulders carefully. Even when it was not cold. Indeed the first present I bought her was a Caribbean woollen scarf. When I first laid it round her shoulders, so white and delicate with a tiny brown birthmark near the nape, there was a moment of mystery and joy: as though it were not me covering her shoulders, but her suddenly covering all of me.

Once when we were visiting the ruins of a gloomy church from the time of the first settlers and as usual I delivered a historical précis, she interrupted me with the words, See for yourself, Theo, how light you are now.

At these words I trembled like a boy to whom an experienced woman, from the heights of her expertise, perhaps as a joke, has revealed that he is apparently blessed with what in due course will make women

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desire him. I leaned over and kissed her. On her hair for the time being. She did not return my kiss but reddened and burst out laughing, Look, Theo, it's so funny, your bossy moustache has started quivering. And yet when we met in Caracas, Noa and I, I was fifty-two, I had been loving various sorts of women for thirty years, I was, in my own opinion, expert, I was acquainted with menus of pleasures such as she had not seen in her wildest dreams, if she had ever had wild dreams. I imagined not. Despite which, the words she spoke to me in the ruins of that church, See for yourself how light you are now, moved me so powerfully that I had to remind myself almost by force that I had stopped in the eighteenth century and I had yet to tell her about how the church and the whole town had collapsed in the great earthquake of 1812 and about the cyclical element that really underlay the shifting power-alliances between the Church, the secret service, the Maoists, the army, the Liberals, and the Republican Guards. I recommenced my lecture, and continued it passionately, lingering over each detail, digressing, enthusing, embarking on Borgesian myths, until she said, That's enough for today, Theo, I can't take any more in.

In the course of four months we may have seen each other only seven or eight times. We went to art exhibitions and concerts, to restaurants that, after her slip-up the first night, we agreed between us she should not be the one to choose, and sometimes on a Sunday we went off for a few hours in the Jeep to the high mountains of the Cordillera del Litoral. She knew only a few hundred words of Spanish, but nevertheless, directly after listening to a short conversation I had had with a petrol pump attendant or a technician from the administration, she would declare without the slightest hesitation that this man was a liar while the other, the fat one, actually liked people but was rather ashamed of it and that was why he was so gruff. What have you swallowed, Noa? A seismograph? A lie detector? She didn't hurry to answer these questions. When she did finally reply, I couldn't see the connection: I grew up, she said, with a paralyzed father and an aunt who was demented by her own idealism, I had to keep my eyes open.

At the end of the evening I would accompany her to the apartment that the Embassy had taken for her; on the floor of a house belonging to some wealthy Jews. We parted at the gate with a goodnight kiss on the cheek or the hair; she had to stand on tiptoe while I almost bowed to her; breathing my fill of that scent of honeysuckle. Gradually I noticed that my trips were tending to bring me to Caracas more and more often. I bought her a pair of woollen socks and a llama wool scarf. She bought me a pot of honey. Then one night, in the spring, there was a thunderstorm and a long power cut and she decided that this time I could stay the

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night: she had a sofa-bed. She sat me on her bed, the rain was beating on the windows like stones, she lit a paraffin heater; poured me a glass of my own brandy, brought some fruit, paper napkins; then all at once she changed her mind, blew out the candle, sat herself down next to me and said, The courting's over; let's make love. And she started unbuttoning my shirt. At that moment I felt a warm flood not just of desire but of protectiveness. Her sensuality turned out to be dead straight, open, and yet – curious, with a strong determination to study me at once and in depth, to skip the niceties, make my acquaintance thoroughly and quickly, establish a foothold in me that very night.

Straight after the love, she fell asleep lying on her stomach like a baby, her face in the hollow of my shoulder. In the morning she said: You enjoyed that a hell of a lot. Like a stallion. Me too.

After the night of the storm and after the following nights, I was still certain that there was no permanent relationship. I still saw myself ending my days alone. But she and I could not have an agreement of the sort I had had all those years with transient women in hotels, villages, hammocks, Development Agency hostels, the two-clause agreement: fair pleasure and farewell. On the contrary: our friendship became open and playful after the night of the storm. We both felt easier and better. It was a strange experience, because up to then I didn't really believe in friendship, certainly not friendship between a man and a woman. Intimacy, yes, and passion, and fair play, and passing affection, and pleasure for pleasure, give and take, all these I had known over the years, and always in the shadow of the inescapable combination of desire and embarrassment. With the limits marked out in advance. But open-handed friendship, an unembarrassed relationship, no limits, I didn't think that was possible between me and a woman. In fact I didn't think it was possible between any two people. Then along came Noa, in her colorful summer dresses that whirled round her legs, with rows of large buttons fastened with loops down the front, the whole length of her lithe body, teasing me, slapping my shoulder sometimes in a gesture of relaxed comradeship, her deep simple sexuality like warm brown bread, the way she loved to strip us both naked in broad daylight, on the bank of a stream or in a clearing in the forest, free from all embarrassment, of flesh, or cash, or feelings, and the way she seemed to have made up her mind to untie me too and set me free.

Once I stayed with her for three days and three nights. When it was time to leave for the airport I said, Look, no arguments, I'm leaving you four hundred dollars on the shelf here. It's what I'd have spent on a hotel. And you're living such a hand-to-mouth existence. Noa said: Fine. That's okay. Thanks. A moment later she changed her mind, she'd worked out

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that the three days I'd stayed with her hadn't set her back more than a hundred. So what, I said, you've earned the rest from me honestly, you can use it to buy a television, call it a present from me, if you start watching a bit in the evenings you might learn some Spanish at last. Noa said, I'm all for a television, but they start at six hundred here and I can't make up the difference. I liked that. And I liked the way she could turn her back on me for a couple of hours, immune to all pleas and blandishments, concentrating on marking some tests that she'd promised to hand back the next morning. Even when we only had one evening together. Once she looked up suddenly from her marking and said in a concentrated way, without a smile: You're a man who likes summing up. Don't sum me up just yet.

In April we both fell sick, me first, with relapsing fever. We must have picked up a tick or a louse on one of our Sunday outings. She put me to bed in a sort of flannel prison nightshirt, with a blue wollen turban on my head like an Indian baby's that covered my forehead and my ears, covered me with four blankets, half-drowned me with a boiling-hot infusion of cactuses that her mad aunt had taught her to make, took several days off work in the Israeli class and the Embassy to nurse me and, wrapping herself in a thick brown grandmotherly dressing gown, she sat next to me and told me in a soft, soporific voice all about her father the paralyzed boxer and her Tolstoyan aunt and Yoshku the born-again Jew and some clown of a peeping tom by the name of Golovoy or Gorovoy. The story got more and more complicated and more and more misty until I fell asleep, and I slept for three days and woke cured and cancelled my flight to Veracruz because Noa herself fell sick. She was a demanding invalid. She wrapped her two fists in my hands and wouldn't let me open them for several hours, it was the only way she could keep warm, despite the four blankets and leather jacket that I wrapped tightly round her legs and zipped up. By the time we had recovered there was such a deep intimacy between us that Noa commissioned me to buy her some German cream for a vaginal inflammation in a pharmacy in Mexico City.

At Easter I took her for a weekend to see the place where they were building a new town with a ring of six modern villages round it, all according to my plans, all in the first phases of construction in the southern state of Tabasco. Noa said: it's spectacular; no it's not, it's human – if only they'd realize back home that its possible to build like this before it's too late. I said: Maybe in Israel they don't need to build like this, they certainly don't need to build the kind of barracks they build there. In Israel the horizon is different. At least, it used to be. Incidentally, what makes you think that spectacular is the opposite of human?

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Noa said, with no obvious connection: Look at us, a pair of teachers with no children, correcting each other all day long. It won't be easy, but at least it won't be boring.

In June, at the end of the school year, she suddenly said: I'm through here. I'm going back to Tel Aviv. Are you coming? Look, I said, it doesn't work like that. I've got a contract till December, and unfinished projects in Tabasco and Veracruz, and there's nothing waiting for me in Israel at all. Noa said: Me neither. Are you coming or staying?

We got to Tel Aviv in July, during a suffocating week-long heat wave. The steamy city repelled me at first glance. After ten years away it looked more ugly than ever: a mess of grimy suburbs with no center. Wars, rhetoric, greed, punctuated by raucous fun and the same sweaty mixture of destiny, and despair. We rented a furnished two-room apartment on Prague Street, behind the central bus garage, and began to settle in. In the late afternoons we went out for long walks along the seashore. In the evenings we tried out restaurants. Then in August she went on a one-day tour of the Negev for teachers and when she got back that evening she said, Let's go and live in Tel Kedar, it's the end of the world, the desert is like an ocean and everything's wide open. Are you coming?

I hesitated for the best part of a week. I remembered Tel Kedar from before the town existed. I'd worked there for a few weeks in the late sixties, in a barbed-wire encampment of tents that was visited once a day by an army tanker that brought us water and the newspapers from Beersheba. For three weeks I roamed all over that bare plateau roasting in the sun at the foot of the cliff from before dawn to after dusk. At night by the light of a pressure lamp I sat in the administration tent sketching rough preliminary ideas for a master plan that was intended to get away from the usual Israeli approach and create a compact desert town, sheltering itself in its own shade, inspired by photographs of Saharan townships in North Africa. Nimrod Finkel looked at the sketches and shrugged his shoulders, Same old Theo, carried away by his fantasies, it's brilliant, it's original, creative, the trouble is, as usual you've left one factor out of account: when all's said and done, Israelis want to live in the Israeli style. Desert or no desert. Just you tell me, Theo, who do you imagine suddenly wants to be transported back to North Africa? The Poles? The Romanians? Or the Moroccans? The Moroccans least of all. And just remember this, chum: this isn't going to be an artists' colony.

That was more or less the end of my contribution to the construction of the desert town of Tel Kedar. I had never experienced the slightest urge to go back and see how it had turned out. I imagined they had built row upon row of identical prefabs with a first floor held up by bare concrete pillars and with sliding shutters on the balconies. They'd have fixed

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all sorts of notices to the concrete pillars, and letter boxes, and receptacles for collecting old newspapers for the Soldiers' Support Committee. And rows of dustbins in rectilinear containers in front of each building.

By the end of the week I said to Noa, All right, why not, let's give it a try. Something inside me responded and wanted to follow her to the desert. Or anywhere. I transferred half my savings from the bank in Toronto, put part of it in index-linked government bonds and part of it in shares and pension plans, bought this apartment, and purchased the property in Herzlyya that brings in a thousand dollars a month. Noa immediately got a job teaching literature in the secondary school. I opened a small planning office. Seven years have passed and we're still here, like a couple that's come through the child-rearing wars and is living in a quiet routine, looking after the houseplants to pass the time between visits from the grandchildren. We've furnished the living room with a white three-piece suite and matching rug. Noa usually invites a few people over on Friday nights, some teachers with their professional army-officer husbands, the local choirmaster; a couple my age from Holland who are both doctors, a hydraulic engineer; a neo-Cubist vegan artist who objects to leather shoes, a drama instructor. We talk about national security and the Occupied Territories. Joke about government ministers. Deplore the way the town has stopped growing, the better residents are leaving and are being replaced by people who are only so-so. Perhaps the immigration from Russia will give us a bit of a boost. Though in point of fact, what will they *do* here. They'll dry out in the sun like us. Noa serves fruit and biscuits and South American coffee that makes your head spin, concocted with spells and brandy. If one of the speakers pauses, hesitating, searching for the right word, Noa has a habit of jumping straight into the gap, volunteering to finish his interrupted sentence, produce the missing word or free an idea that had got stuck. Not as though she is dominating the conversation but like an usherette whose job is to stand at a particular spot and gently take any latecomers by the elbow to make sure they do not stumble in the dark on some unseen step.

As the evening wears on the conversation breaks up into groups: the men discuss the issue of the deterioration of standards in public life, while the women exchange their impressions of a new play or novel that is causing controversy in the newspapers. Occasionally they come together again around scandals in artistic circles in Tel Aviv or a recent television broadcast, and there may even be a few local affairs, generally thanks to Muki Peleg. The artist may say, for instance: A couple of days ago I went to see an exhibition of young minimalists in Rishon Le-Zion, followed by a display of contemporary multimedia. Art is galloping ahead, culture

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is booming, and all we do is sit here slowly evaporating in the sun. There's a charming pedestrianized street now in Rishon Le-Zion with galleries, artists' clubs, restaurants, and the other streets are brightly lit and full of life, people come back at midnight from a night out in Tel Aviv and fill the cafes and talk about new directions in the theater, here all we can do is have a game of backgammon, watch TV and go to bed with the birds. The aerobics teacher says: If only they'd link us up to the cable television, like everyone else. And her husband, the lieutenant colonel, adds bitterly: You can be sure of one thing, darling, that those settlers in the territories will get cable TV long before us, we're at the back of the queue as far as they're concerned, if we're in it at all. Noa says: We could bring that display here too. We could rig up some spotlights and turn the corridor of Founders' House into an art gallery. And why shouldn't we invite an art historian from Beersheba occasionally to give a lecture?

As for me, I go round the room serving the drinks in a gesture of democratic politeness, emptying the ashtrays, offering the occasional anecdote from the Caribbean islands or an example of Indian humor. Most of the time I just sit and listen. Trying to guess what sort of judgment Noa will pronounce after the guests have left: good or bad, hot or cold, desperate. And it's she who says to me, You're such a summer-up. Don't sum up, just watch.

At midnight or twelve-thirty the guests disperse, promising that we'll meet again next Friday. Noa and I clear away and wash up and then sit down for another half an hour or so over a glass of mulled wine in winter or an iced coffee in the summer. Her blonde hair masks half her face from me, but her printed dress leaves her shoulders bare and they are delicate and fragile like leaves turning brown in the autumn, in places where they have autumn. At moments like these, when we are exchanging views about the acquaintances who have left, I still have an urge to take a shawl and cover her shoulders that are punctuated with a tiny brown birthmark near her soft nape. I start to woo her in my usual way, that enjoys waiting. Drawn by the scent of honeysuckle. Sometimes we go on talking till half past two at the kitchen table about the wonderful sights we used to go and see at weekends in the Cordillera del Litoral. Until Noa interrupts me in mid-sentence and says, That's enough talking, let's make love, and then she undoes my belt and undresses us both and lays her head in the hollow of my shoulder and puts my fingers to her lips. Our life is quiet and steady. The sitting-room rug is white and the armchairs are light-coloured too. Between them is a black metal standard lamp. There are houseplants in the corner. We have separate bedrooms because it turned out that we sleep differently.

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On fine Saturdays I sometimes wake her at half past six in the morning, we get dressed and have a coffee, then put on trainers and set off to find out what's new in the desert, walking down one wadi for a couple of hours and coming back up by another one. Once home we munch something from the fridge without bothering to sit down, then go back to sleep till the afternoon, when she likes to sit at the kitchen table, remote, bent forward, concentrating, planning a lesson or marking, while I sit and watch the red pen trembling between her fingers that have aged prematurely as though betraying her youthful body. One day I'll surprise her and buy her a little desk that can stand in the corner of her bedroom. Meanwhile I put it off so as to be able to watch her sitting at the kitchen table. While she finishes her marking I get some food together for us and switch on the TV and we sit and watch the Saturday afternoon French film. On Saturday evenings we sometimes go out to a café or to the Paris. We stroll in the evening air for another half an hour in the square. Then we go home and listen to some quiet music sitting at the kitchen table. The next day another week begins here. Seven years have gone by like this, carefully avoiding the troupe of strolling players repeating, as if they were accursed, their old passion play: wandering, suffering, perdition. Until a weird pupil of hers died, in an accident when he was drugged, or it may have been suicide, there's no way of telling, and instead of editing a memorial volume, she agreed to help set up a rehabilitation clinic in his memory. The father of the boy has promised a financial donation, and for some reason I can't fathom decided to pick on her to run a sort of board of trustees. What does Noa know of committees and trusteeship, it's bound to lead to disappointment and embarrassment that I'd have liked to spare her, only I've no idea how. At first I tried to warn her off gently, and she responded with a sarcastic anger that I didn't know she had in her. Then I tried to help with various simple suggestions and was met with her cutting resentment. She did agree in an absent-minded way to accept a loan from me, without seeing that as a shackle or a trap.

The only way I can help her is by avoiding any attempt to help. I have to hold back, as if to diminish a pain by regulating my breathing - and that I have no difficulty doing. Her strange project is becoming precious to her, "the gleam in your eye" as Shlomo Benizri says. As though she had got herself a lover.

What about me? I followed her here, to her world's end, because I only wanted to be with her. Instead of the peace of the desert, all I have now is a sense of approaching danger. Which I can't prevent because I have no idea which direction it's coming from. Once, before all this, in the army, I volunteered to serve for six months in a small reconnaissance task-force in the desert, dashing around the Ramon Mountains in a cou-

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ple of Jeeps, because I had turned down the command of an engineering platoon. It was before the road was built, before there were even dirt tracks here. Sometimes we would spot the silhouette of a hyena in the moonlight or a group of ibexes seemingly frozen on the line of the hills in the first light of dawn. Mostly we slept all day in hollows in the rocks and came out in the evening to give chase or to lie in ambush at night for caravans of smugglers crossing the Negev Mountain on their way from Sinai to Jordan. It was in 1951, or maybe 1952. We had a Bedouin tracker with us, a gruff, taciturn man, no longer young, dressed in the tattered uniform of the British Border Police, who knew how to read footprints even on rocky ground. He could sniff sundried donkey or camel dung and tell us who had passed this way, when, whether heavily laden or not, and even from which tribe. He could say on the basis of the dried-up dung what the beasts had eaten and where, and that is how he could work out where they were coming from and where they might be going and whether they were smuggling. He was a small, wiry man, and his face was not tanned but the color of the cold ashes of a nomad campfire. It was said that his wife and daughter had been murdered in some tribal vendetta. And that he hopelessly loved a young cripple in Ashkelon. Even on nights when clouds blotted out the stars and the mountaintops he would bend down and pick up a rusty cartridge case, a faded buckle, a dry crust, traces of human excrement on the black scree, a gnawed bone thrown in a crevice, and decipher it with the tips of his fingers. We never let him have a gun, perhaps because he was always awake when we were asleep. It was only when we were all wide-awake and starting up the Jeeps full of the thrill of the chase, making the wadis re-echo in long rolls of dull thunder to our salvos of machine-gun fire, that he would detach himself from us and doze sitting down on the floor at the back of a filthy jeep, with his foxlike chin between his knees, and his eyes neither open nor closed, waiting for silence to return and cover everything with a veil of greyish dust. Then he would wake without a sound and set off barefoot, stooped and crouching, as though straining to lick the soil, pattering away from us on his own to sniff out a cave or pit whose opening we had not even noticed as we drove past. Aatef was his name, but behind his back we called him "Night" because the night was as bright to him as if he had the characteristics of a nocturnal creature.

But we were careful never to use this name in his presence because, we reminded ourselves, in Arabic the Hebrew word for night, *lailia*, is a woman's name.

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POEMS

Odysseus Elytis *(1911-1996)*

Towards Troy

Strong Kissavos blows and the land fills with comeliness
The hills exchange places with one another but the sea's
Powerful one leaves an unspun cloudlet on Myrina's heights
For the travellers to learn whose fate is engraved in gold
And whose in brass. Because the two are not two
It is the one of how many and it is the which one of the other
Peaks seek pure snow and the Centaur seeks
A stream that lost its way
The mind can hold a whole life of minds
and a still unthrown thunderbolt
Is it because the southwind planted its storms elsewhere?
Or because the plains took the wave of floating wheat?

Dejected as always Thessalians got hungry for an island. From there
They set off for the area of Troy; the aims of the water's horsemen
succeeded
The first olive tree plighted troth to the second and the fields lit up as at
Easter
Gentle downslopes and then heights of waters again
Stonebuilt children of churches who still continue the game
At a little corner forgetting some small invisible monastery

Genoese women put the child to the breast. And Ulema
Proceed in white Turkish trousers
And with heavy red-on-skyblue collars
Years which seem endless
Even if you were born yesterday
The less the master lasts the more the slave lasts
Yet ambrosial water flows from one kylix to another
And from a light like a lonely little monk in the sky
A wide dome opens for the vineyard to fit
Its star-cluster in. So the seers once were right:

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Bite with diamond teeth the sea's second hovering myrtle and
Amphitrite's fourth and you too!
The seabream is caught in air with its patronymic if not
The seafloor with its sparse beard
Houses with yards and closets lean to one side
Like boats and a power through lineage slowly erases
The imprints of smell left on our ancestral olive presses
By the fingers of the tough hands of Yera
I speak of the truth that the wind of Myrina brings down to
The waters of Krategos. Winnowed disyllables which you either read
Or they loudly memorize you
Kissme Osea 'fore I loseyou
A key turns both ways either you are locked in
Or you are opened to all. With open windows and sails
Towards Troy.

In Ioulita's Blue

What I mean can be found both in Briseis' shard
And in Euripus' shell. August must have been wildly hungry in its calm
So to want summer wind; so that it may leave a bit of salt on
The eyebrow and a blue in the sky whose name you can hear sounding
sublime among the others
But at bottom it is *Ioulita's blue*
As if a passage of an infant's breath went in advance
So that you can quite clearly see the opposite mountains approaching
And an ancient dove's voice crossing the waves and vanishing

And if it is holy it is returned to goodness
Through the air. Comeliness multiplies so much through her
Own children and man grows before sleep
Depicts him two or three times
In its mirror. Picking tangerines or philosophers' streams if not a
Moving town of bees on the pubis. So be it
Grapes make a black sun and the skin whiter

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Who other than death claims us? Who for pay commits injustice?
Life is a chord
in which a third sound interposes
And it is this sound that actually says what the poor man throws away
And what the rich man collects: caresses of a cat well-woven osiers
Wormwood with capers evolutionary words with one of their vowels short
Kisses from Cythera. So with such things ivy
Takes hold and the moon grows bigger for lovers to see
In what *Ioulita's blue* it is possible for you to read the gossamer of fate

Oh! I have seen many sunsets and walked along the diazomata of many ancient
Theaters. But O beauty time was never lent to me
For it to win a victory against blackness and to prolong the extent of love so that
Our inner lark can warble more brilliant more euphonic
From its own pulpit
A scowling cloud which a bare "no" lifts as if it were fluff
And then it falls again and you get your fill fill fill of rain
You become the same age as the untouched without knowing it and
You and your girl cousins continue tickling one another in the garden's untrodden depths
Tomorrow a passing musican will sprinkle us with nightflowers
But nevertheless we shall remain a bit unhappy
as usually with love
But an heretical taste ascends from the mastic or the earth's clay
Half of hatred and dream half of nostalgia

If we continue to be perceiveable as men who
Dwell beneath domes speckled all over with emerald tritons then
The hour will be half a second past noon
And the absolute perfection will be
completed in a garden with hyacinths
Whose withering was removed forever. Something gray
Which a single lemon drop clears up in which case
You see what I meant from the beginning being engraved
With distinct typeface
in *Ioulita's blue.*

Translated from the Greek by Jeffrey Carson and Nikos Sarris

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Arthur Rimbaud

The Swindled Heart

My poor heart dribbles at the poop
My heart fouled with tobacco juice:
They spill on it great spurts of soup,
My poor heart dribbles at the poop;
Jeered at by the entire troop:
They laugh together; they call it loose:
My poor heart dribbles at the poop,
My heart fouled with tobacco juice.

Ithyphallic, erkish and lewd,
their jeering has corrupted it!
Their drawings at the helm are crude,
Ithyphallic, erkish and lewd.
O waves like magic arabic,
Carry off my heart and polish it!
Ithyphallic, erkish and lewd,
Their jeering has corrupted it!

When they've swallowed their dried up quids
What shall we do, O swindled heart?
Hiccupping then as Bacchus bids,
When they've swallowed their dried up quids,
I'll surely feel my belly start
When I choke down, again, my heart:
When they've swallowed their dried up quids
What shall we do, O swindled heart?

Translated from the French by Matthias Regan

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Rei Terada

Date

The silk-lined fruit's
bullet of fiberoptic insulate

just cracks its wax-
papyric skin. That dis-

placed insect wing the thing
comes wrapped in speaks

to the fan of wood's
fondness for tangibles. Just what

the skeptic eye cannot believe:
the amber zero, packed

with substance as
the cryptic traveller's

chamber is loaded up
with oil for dark, wine for the boring ride.

Water and seed, commodities
implausible as Beatrice's star,

starch pith and sugar – images
as solute as the you

in you of what
metaphors are metaphors for,

things would be: the all-
walled cube,

the room completely filled,
the light-

less sphere that cannot
grow more gold.

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Attila József

Worn Out (Megfáradt ember, 1923)

Over the fields somber peasants
start homewards, silently.
We lie side by side: the river and I.
Delicate grasses sleep under my heart.

Calm rolls in on the river's back.
My worries dissolve into mist;
lying here, I am not man or child
or brother or Magyar – just worn out.

Evening ladles out peace.
I am a slice of its warm bread.
The sky, too, rests; the stars settle down
on the quiet river and on my forehead.

Everything Is Old (Öreg Minden, 1928)

Everything's old here. The senile storm,
propped on crooked lightningbolts,
hisses at thornwhiskered roses
and hobbles along on bad feet.

Everything's old. The revolution
squats, coughing on scarred stones
that scatter, and in his bony hand
a penny shines: my loveliest song.

Why isn't my hand transparent-old,
so that, touching my wrinkled face,
it drops into my lap? See it
and believe: tears trill from my eyes.

Oh, my youth! My age of altars!
Like shivering wide-eyed fish, this
flame trembles in sunset's net
and my deathdust turns to duckweed.

Translated from the Hungarian by Daphne Kalotay

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David Weiss

*

Homecoming
without skin under starlight

Here at every here
you were made to wait

The radius of yourself
like the hands of a shattered pocketwatch

Ashes turned inside out
are what you know of belonging

Wind-staked
you have come from afar

to speak against yourself

*

Cats shriek
They tear at each other

and Venus
in the fusion of snails

in the scent of narcissus and whiskey
and the recklessness

we rue and treasure
never tires of it

She has a form for every wish
Even the Unnameable One

whom she's driven so wild
has forgotten its nature

and caterwauls among the starways
one of the lesser gods

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*

How
from out the cardinal's throat
come the contours of
paradise

enunciated

but unconsummated

In that fire in that awakening
you too will be
a memory come alive

Scarlet in the wires of forsythia
the cardinal is itself
a tatter
of the inner lining of nothingness

where it awaits us
as scripture no longer scripture

no longer what
in the process of appearing

still does not appear

Suzanne Paola

Borderlands: Infertility

I should have known you wouldn't come here,
where hemlocks point out where the wind goes,
& the sea never stops,
its slap candid as doctor's to infant,
its flood salt & menstrual.

Tell me what keeps you off –
windsound in a gull's throat,
the mad milk of whitecaps, or the trains,

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their winching & hauling, their slow,
grunt-wheeled passages.

And the scars on my hands –
How soft and pervious the mother's body!

Child, a strange passion
rules this place.
Breath-holes rising through the surf, through the void
the surf leaves –

while gray gulls
vanish into clouds, as if
some god desired them,

then return,
taut, untouched, still looking.

Susan Wicks

Components of Black

watercolour 60" x 40"

(for Cathleen Daly)

In clutches of pale eggs, or the bone china
of raised tea-cups, the simple snow of paper
gleams from between shadows all shades but
black: grey, green-blue, violet, that old indigo
across eyelids, the dark chromatic beds
of night rivers. See how this multiple darkness
pushes plump leaves aside to wind
between stems, how this slick beanstalk
has grown to block the daylight, how the tangled
limbs bruise to slate, bronze to a warm olive
shot with purple, before the chosen
stems can wilt, the pale mouths of camellias
gag open, damned to repeat for us
our eyes' clear grain, our painted jungle
of pigment, the darkness between flowers.

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A. F. Moritz

Touring Machine

The philosophers are examining this man
who seems to be sleeping. To palpate
his soft tissues they have to kneel

around the old scratched walnut bed, hands in the tatters
of the tattersall, and to keep from waking
the subject they have to whisper – so low

that from a slight distance their words all sound like God
bless mummy and daddy . . . Now it's midnight,
two hours into the fearful experiment:

banyans, grasses like rock crystal sabres, spider plants
two hundred feet high have marched through the titanium doors
and grown over him. The boots of the learned

ur-theologians are filled up with scorpions.
The cure for malaria has been undiscovered
and those of them who have not died are drinking quinine,

shivering on a crumbled verandah. They trade
badinage with a consumptive young prostitute,
her song of hope wasted is far better than hope,

and they keep their minds on their work.
Now it's four a.m. and the subject has fallen
into a well. Nothing any more exists around him,

even his bed and his tormentors are gone
and he tumbles endlessly in wellness.
This is pictured by the instruments and the doctors watch it:

an image enhancement, that shows what it looks like
to live in utter darkness and be too small to be seen,
"looks like" here having to be taken in a special sense

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that corresponds only analogically to "looks like".
So for the hour between four and five
it seems he is splashing down and down through strata

of water or fire: something that wavers as he hits,
resists and then admits him, shimmering
in concentric rings of light that still and still

as he descends, floating, falling and drowning beneath,
until he strikes the next level, and the whole
drama of impact and absorption repeats.

And is this anything but words? The computer model
struggles to feel its digits, and now outside
the birds are waking up, if they ever slept,

if they aren't just an unresting system
that tortures itself with lack of rest
but fortunately it can't feel, or the broken egg

fallen on the ground before it could hatch
is symbol and reality of one,
one at least, who has rested.

The thieving light glimmers and puts back exactly
in place what it took when it left: the dresser
with its streaked three-leaf mirror is ready

to reflect a face that lives or dies
of being here, and is yet not here.
And now he's awake. He hears birds, and there are birds.

And now he lifts his head.

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Barbara Helfgott Hyett

Northern Swift Fox
- Vulpes velox hebes

She circles into wind and lies down
where she can see the trail on which
she's come. Danger flattens
her black ears against her. She listens
backwards. Her fur is a batting of stars.

At night, she rises, finds every cache
she has hidden, unburying the flesh
and the bones: What will be eaten,
what carried away? She lives
without malice or shame,

compelled to pursue the shoulders of any
fat mouse, the scruff of a rabbit's neck.
When she is done she must stalk again.
Behind her eyes are mirrors. She can see
herself in the famine between kills.

Mary Jo Bang

Chicago

On the 44th floor, plate glass against night
twins the room, invites me out
for a moment of vertigo,

a mock suicide. Below is Rush Street:
bar talk and head lamps crawl
on a lighted screen like drosophila waking

from an ether sleep. Under the bed,
red coral carpet, azalea swirls.
Image is invincible, defies gravity,

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gets away with the breathless life of a jar.
From this leased remove, cars appear docile,
doormen surrendering. An ambulance blinks,

hush and hollow. Above them static as air,
I am unfallen. The world without me
has rarely seemed this clear.

Sandy Solomon

Jealousy

Such green in such abundance – grass, trees,
even the pond, green with algae and reflected
growth, honed on green, like those geese on north
(two mutter by, one with a wing feather gone).

Unbearable. A note held too long –
down to the play of lighter green on lawn
as sun splatters through new leaves flaunted,
lifted in that feckless, irritating breeze,

so temperate, the air, so full of itself,
as lovers, full of themselves and no one else,
stroll across the distant lawn until
obscured by walls of vine-tangled, flowering shrubs.

Beyond the smokey trails of dogwood blossoms,
where the woods fill and float, where the path descends,
there, crow and jay will gawk and gawk, there,
all sense, all evidence belongs to lovers.

And none can enter the sigh of their spring,
none eavesdrop, none watch, none reach without risk –
a hornets' lullaby, flailed sunset,
spindling knot of briar beside the spoor.

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BOOKS

John Dewey's America

JOHN DEWEY AND THE HIGH TIDE OF AMERICAN LIBERALISM. By Alan Ryan. W. W. Norton. $30.00.

When Alan Ryan looks back to the 1890s, the period in which John Dewey began to emerge as a public intellectual, he finds a ghastly preview of our own time:

> Dewey's America was one in which the problems of the inner city were appalling. In the early 1890s homelessness in Chicago sometimes reached 20 percent . . Disease was rife, and medical services were out of the reach of the poor. . . . The upper classes were apparently indifferent to the fate of the poor and even to the fate of the working near-poor. In the cities the response of the better-off was to remove themselves to the suburbs . . . in Congress it was to legislate to make it harder for the poor to organize, and in the courts it was to make it impossible for the unions to strike.
>
> Nor was it clear what any individual person should or could do about all this. The political parties of the day were networks of influence-peddling, and local government was corrupt . . . [and] nobody had much faith that Washington could formulate a coherent vision for the country's future . . .

This catalogue of likenesses between past and present amounts to a depressingly persuasive argument that American history, in ways that matter, has stood still over the last century. One of the satisfactions of Ryan's book is that he makes this case not in order to scold those who still believe that our history can be truthfully told as a tale of progress, but as an occasion for "a conversation between Dewey's aspirations and our doubts." Ryan's book is not a moralistic list of grievances; it is written in the hope that the ebbed tide of liberalism may yet flow again.

Honoring Dewey's hostility to "personal reminiscence," Ryan has not exactly written a biography. He touches only briefly on the stresses of Dewey's childhood and his marriage, which, as both intimate partnership and professional collaboration (Dewey's wife was principal of the Lab School in Chicago), had its share of troubles. He indulges in a minimum of psychological speculation and in no gossip at all; reading his book is like attending a seminar to which the teacher brings no prescriptive or settled opinions – only an honest commitment to test Dewey's ideas under the pressure of strenuous inquiry.

Ryan begins by reporting his puzzlement at those "American students in Oxford to whom I suggested Dewey as a plausible topic for research,"

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and who "would come back after a summer vacation hell-bent on studying Lukacs, Marcuse, Adorno, or Habermas" – a representative instance of Americans' tendency to doubt the value of their own intellectual tradition in the face of European competition. For Ryan, remote as he may have been from Dewey's New England roots (Dewey was born into a Vermont Congregationalist family), the American philosopher was an exciting discovery. What Ryan particularly relished was Dewey's pugnacious brand of liberalism associated in the British tradition with the Oxford don T. H. Green, whom he presents as a "premonition of Dewey," and whose core conviction he sums up in this formulation:

> the good man or woman is the person who combines a dutiful observance of the community's existing standards with his or her own individual efforts to push the community toward ideals that its current condition gestures toward but that its behavior does not yet embody.

This quiet summary of the liberal sensibility is liable to sound banal in the radical's ear. In fact, it expresses an intellectual balance that is exquisitely difficult to sustain; and Ryan is certainly right that it was the mission of Dewey's life, no less than of Green's, to expound and promote it. Green (known in some circles as the "father of Britain's welfare state") disseminated it through his Oxford tutorials, in which he taught some of Britain's future leaders. Dewey, too, was a university man, exerting a lasting influence on both Chicago and Columbia, especially on Columbia's Teacher's College, from which his influence still radiates into American primary and secondary education.

Here is Dewey's own account, from *Democracy and Education* (1916), of the means by which the worth of a society can be evaluated:

> An undesirable society . . . is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic.

Although Ryan does not quote this passage, the cumulative force of his book is to restore to our awareness the distinctive combination of passion and prudence that suffuses it. Lacking the technical brilliance of Charles Sanders Peirce and the poetic gift of William James, Dewey had a tendency to write in gluey abstractions, which is one reason that he has

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become the least appreciated among the great American pragmatists. More than Peirce and James, however, he was a combatant in the culture wars of his time – a besieged defender of liberalism in politics, higher education, and the schools. His writings are reports from the front, resolute expressions of openness and experimentalism during a period when American society was periodically gripped by fits of xenophobia and was in a more or less chronic state of reaction against immigrant peoples and ideas.

Dewey was a contemporary of both the "multiculturalists" who argued that American society should be reconceived as a collection of ethnic clusters, and of the self-appointed protectors of Anglo-Saxon purity who argued that, with assimilation faltering, "aliens" should be excluded or expelled. He distrusted not only the opposing parties but the very terms of this debate, because both sides seemed to him fundamentally disrespectful of the ideal of democracy, which is inconsistent with any form of group insularity, and which ultimately rests on a concept of inviolable individual rights.

Dewey's vision for society was finally simple. He also "wanted a world," as Ryan says of Green, "where the Kantian idea that human beings are equal members of a Kingdom of Ends would be brought down to earth and made actual in the institutions of modern society." Such a society could be built, Dewey believed, only on the foundation of the free individual – whom he conceived not as some closed monadic entity, walled and integral, but as a being whose vitality depended on its receptivity to new experience. Democracy was, to Dewey, the natural form through which the human imagination seeks to express itself; consciousness itself was a kind of rough-and-tumble democracy – a continuous infusion of new impressions and thoughts that combine ceaselessly into new forms. Dewey found democratic aspiration in the religious longing for equality before God and (anticipating, as Ryan points out, Karl Popper's concept of the "open society") in the genius of modern science, whose experimental method and continually critical assessment of prevailing hypotheses struck him as a model for all forms of genuine thought and practice. Dewey stood directly in the lineage of Whitman, who had celebrated in *Democratic Vistas* (1870) the American "idea of perfect individualism" as the "religious element . . . at the core of democracy" that gives meaning and substance to the theory of political equality.

"It is in democracy," Dewey declared with almost Whitmanesque bravado, that "the incarnation of God in man . . . becomes a living present thing"; and he went so far as to claim for democracy that it was "the means by which the revelation of truth is carried on." But his emphasis was never as much on the revelation as on the carrying on:

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we live not in a settled and finished world, but in one which is going on, and where our main task is prospective, and where retrospect – and all knowledge as thought is distinct from retrospect – is of value in the solidity, security, and fertility it affords our dealings with the future.

Dewey, in other words, believed that only democracy provided the requisite condition for progress and was the only political form with sufficient openness and fluency for the fulfillment of the potentialities of the human imagination.

In view of what Ryan calls his rejection of "both the idealist emphasis on the will and the transcendental character of the better or higher self by reference to which we judge our actions," Dewey is sometimes conscripted as a sort of *avant la lettre* member of the postmodern party. Like many writers today, he insisted on the constructedness and fluidity of the self, and it was this conception of the self as perpetually unfinished that lay at the heart of his educational theory and practice. But, as Ryan recognizes, Dewey would have abhorred the kind of skepticism about all hierarchies of value that now characterizes much "postmodern" thought. He had no doubt of the superiority of what today is called the American "ideology." He was, as Ryan puts it, "a benign, mild, and good-natured nationalist, but he was a nationalist." Believing, furthermore, that science and liberal democracy marked enormous advances from other forms of social and intellectual organization, Dewey wrote sentences that would never satisfy the neutrality-standard of modern anthropological relativism: "That savage tribes regard aliens and enemies as synonymous is not accidental. It springs from the fact that they have identified their experience with rigid adherence to their past customs." All true thought (as opposed to knowledge), he insisted, is prospective.

Acknowledging the transcendental traces and the nationalist tinge in Dewey's work, Ryan nevertheless makes clear that he regards him as a valuable and undervalued resource in our dark time, when God and nation seem, to some, to be noxious concepts left over from a world well lost. One of the merits of his book is how squarely he faces the obstacles that stand in the way of the rescue operation he has proposed. For one thing, Dewey lived too long for the good of his reputation. Like Whitman, the brashness and intellectual courage that made him a figure of controversy for much of his life have tended to fade into the image of the doddering gray sage. And, of course, he has been lampooned as the soft-minded fool responsible for the breakdown of pedagogical discipline in our schools – the man who thought that schoolchildren should close up their books and go outside for a sort of permanent recess.

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But these impediments to understanding Dewey are easily overcome. Nothing much is left of them by the time Ryan is through. A more serious problem is what has happened to the individual who stood at the center of Dewey's imagination. The individual celebrated by Deweyan liberalism, Ryan writes near the close of his book,

> is someone who is thoroughly engaged with his or her work, family, local community and its politics, who has not been coerced, bullied, or dragged into these interests but sees them as fields for a self-expression quite consistent with losing himself or herself in the task at hand.

This creature has become endangered, if not extinct, at a time when the idea of the "local" is difficult to reconcile with the undifferentiated world of the internet, when pressures on the disintegrating family are multiple and growing, and when American society refuses to make the investments in education and social support systems that are necessary for the sort of engaging work Dewey describes to be accessible to each individual.

If the odds have grown against the survival of the Deweyan individual in the postmodern world, then so have the difficulties raised by what might be called Dewey's philosophical agnosticism. He was, in effect, content to defer questions about the ultimate source of meaning in the world; he believed human beings could get along on the principle that, as Ryan puts it, "people must experiment, report on their experiments, and hope to agree on good practice." He did not allow himself to be distracted by the metaphysical question, again in Ryan's words, "of whether we provide all the meaningfulness that the world contains or whether the world provides it."

For Dewey, this was a moot question because democracy itself – in the large, diffusive sense in which he understood it – was tantamount to God. The democratic process – in the individual consciousness as well as in society – was enough to believe in. It was, as Ryan says, "the agency of religious truth." Here, I think, is the clue to why Dewey has slipped away from us. He was ultimately a believer. He had a deeply Protestant skepticism of the claim that truth could be embodied in any fixed institution or singular authority; but he also anticipated what William James, in *Pragmatism* (1907), called "that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine all our temporary truths will someday converge."

If we are to press Dewey into service in our present cultural crisis, we must not only share his restlessness with all established forms but also his conviction that the experimental method may lead toward something that

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can be called the truth. We must grasp, and make actual, his insight that "since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest . . . [which] can be created only by education." Above all, the challenge of Dewey is to recognize that even if the idea of the free individual is a metaphysical fiction, it is a necessary fiction – the only premise upon which a society can be built in which men do not resort to the desire, as Ryan puts it, to turn other men "into components of our world, to demonstrate by controlling them that they have no value of their own and that such value as they do have is what we give them." It is worth remembering that for Dewey, the choice between individual and community was a false choice, because there could be no comprehensible distinction between them.

Ryan closes his exemplary book with the thought that "those of us who are terrified by assorted tribalisms, fundamentalisms, and nationalisms at the end of the twentieth century can side with Dewey only with our fingers crossed." Perhaps Dewey's optimism was unfounded and his metaphysics unexamined, and perhaps all we can do, with fingers crossed, is hope that he was right. But after reading this book, it is hard to think of a better man with whom to stand.

Andrew Delbanco

Sidney Hook, Polemicist

LETTERS OF SIDNEY HOOK: DEMOCRACY, COMMUNISM, AND THE COLD WAR. Edited by Edward S. Shapiro. M. E. Sharpe. $65.00.

Although these selected letters represent only a fraction of the mammoth collection housed in the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, they make it clear – sometimes heartbreakingly so – just how committed Sidney Hook was to freedom, the democratic process, and perhaps most of all, the power of ideas. He labored much of his life under the long shadow of his teacher, John Dewey: first as Marxism's most patient, articulate explainer, and then as a fiery polemicist who was equally patient when it came to pointing out the dangers of totalitarianism in general and Stalin in particular. That Hook conducted his public life during a romantic, quasi-religious ethos in which beliefs mattered a good deal more than ideas is simultaneously a measure of intellectual courage and nearly unshakeable naiveté.

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One might rightly ask what, if anything, Hook's private letters add to our understanding of the man that we don't already know from his numerous books, articles, manifestoes, and public utterances. Those hoping that Hook will dish out dirt about partisans and adversaries will be disappointed. As he points out in the introduction to his autobiography, *Out of Step*: "The avid curiosity that pursues people into bedrooms and bathrooms seems to me to be a violation of privacy." Rather, what Hook's letters reveal is a man who turned philosophic rigor into political theory and perhaps even more than that, a man who could no more help being a "teacher" than a person invaded by the muse can avoid becoming a poet. Here is the young Sidney Hook in 1930, writing to New York University's Dean James B. Munn, explaining the disruptions that occurred when Hamilton Fish addressed the Social Problems Club, of which Hook was advisor, on "The Red Menace":

> The Social Problems Club is *not* a communist organization. It is devoted to an impartial and objective analysis of contemporary social theory and problems. It is true that some of its members have communist sympathies, but many more of its members, including its leading officers, are non-communists. . . . I have been called upon on occasion to arbitrate differences between the various groups within the organization. At all times I have impressed upon them the necessity of sober analysis and a tolerant, experimental attitude instead of noisy sectarian loyalties and uncritical faiths. I have reminded them that enthusiasm is an easy gift of youth, clear ideas a hard-won victory.

Transcending the cultural context in which this letter, as well as a good many others in this collection, was written is Hook's unswerving commitment to a rational exchange of views and the "hard-won victory" that clear ideas represent. Granted, for those interested in the battles that, taken together, defined cultural warfare during the days when the world was divided between democracy and totalitarianism, Hook's letters on the infamous Waldorf Conference; the formation of the Committee for Cultural Freedom; the vexing problem of what to do with Party-line professors in an era of McCarthyism; what stance a citizen ought to take once our government had committed itself to the Vietnam War, are indispensable reading.

That Hook's correspondence often repeats the central thesis of his books such as *Heresy, Yes, Conspiracy, No* or *Academic Thought and Academic Anarchy* is true enough, but what the letters add is a behind-the-scenes look at how political strategies are formed and then executed. Where others lost heart, Hook stayed the course, often at the expense of

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his own scholarship and nearly always of the coin of wide popularity. That he should now be much honored as the godfather of the neoconservative movement is somewhat ironic, given his flinty insistences that he belonged to no political party and thought of himself as a democratic socialist of a peculiar sort.

Hook believed that error had *rights*. When Herbert Aptheker, the American Communist and historian of Negro slave revolts, offered to debate him publicly on the question of whether or not membership in the Communist Party was sufficient reason to drum somebody out of the professoriate, Hook responded:

> I would no more help to build up an audience for you than I would for a member of the Nazi Party who offered to debate me to prove that Hitler was not really an anti-Semite. My evidence for characterizing the Communist Party as a conspiracy, and its members as professionally unfit to fulfull the vocation of a teacher, has been published many times. Subject to the laws of libel, you enjoy the freedom of the press in our country to answer that evidence – a greater freedom of the press, I may add, than would be extended to you in your own fatherland, the Soviet Union.
>
> If you wish to reply to me, I suggest as a medium the pages of the *Daily Worker* or *The New Masses and the Mainstream* or *Political Affairs*. I shall read what you write with interest, for I am always prepared to examine my position anew.

Everything about Hook's letters suggests that his willingness to rethink a position was genuine. But if Hook rightly demured when it came to gladiatorial contests of the sort that now dominate much of our public discussion, he was surely the rottweiler of letter writers, never allowing the slightest slip in logic or argumentation to go unchallenged. Sometimes a missive from Hook would begin with a hope that he could "clear up some of the points you have difficulty with," and then go on to explain, often in four or five densely-argued pages, where the person was badly confused. On other occasions, Hook would fall back on Montaigne's crack about stupidity being a right one ought not abuse.

This collection of Hook's letters results in a portrait of him that hasn't quite come through before, as the uncompromising, unflappable teacher. It is true that Hook was more the polemicist arguing for a political vision than the Socratic persona hiding behind a mask of ignorance as he doggedly goes about the business of determining the truth. But if Hook was spared the hemlock that is, one gathers, the highest acccolade that can come to the lifelong gadfly, he certainly received more than his share of lumps on the floor of faculty meetings at New York University. Indeed,

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it is hard to think of another Cold War battler who was so roundly reviled. To his credit, Hook continued to speak his mind and write his trenchant letters through five of the most contentious decades in American culture. And to his credit, Edward S. Shapiro not only provides a helpful overview for each of these decades, but also annotates each letter with impeccable scholarship. The result is a book that earns its place among the very best of Sidney Hook's estimable works.

Sanford Pinsker

The Politics of Academe

HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER FIRE: POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND THE CRISIS OF THE HUMANITIES. Edited by Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson. Routledge. $55.00.
WE SCHOLARS: CHANGING THE CULTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY. By David Damrosch. Harvard University Press. $32.50.
CULTURAL CAPITAL: THE PROBLEMS OF LITERARY CANON FORMATION. By John Guillory. University of Chicago Press. $36.00.
THE USES OF THE UNIVERSITY. Fourth Ed. By Clark Kerr. Harvard University Press. $15.95.
LEARNING FROM THE PAST. Edited by Diane Ravitch and Maris A. Vinovskis. Johns Hopkins University Press. $48.50.
AN ETHICAL EDUCATION: COMMUNITY AND MORALITY IN THE MULTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY. Edited by M. N. S. Sellers. Berg Publishers. $54.95.
PC WARS: POLITICS AND CORRECTNESS IN THE ACADEMY. Edited by Jeffrey Williams. Routledge. $55.00.

It was some time ago when I first heard the joke about academic politics: "Question - Why are academic politics so vicious? Answer - Because the stakes are so low." This joke is more tragic than humorous, for American higher education is in rapid decline. For instance, prestigious colleges and universities are competing ruthlessly for the best students, while less illustrious ones compete for students no matter what their academic preparation. As enrollments and external funding decrease, many smaller colleges skitter dangerously at the edge of bankruptcy. Programs at most colleges and universities have proliferated to such a degree that the intellectual core of higher education has been hidden by a panoply of institutes, research centers, and less than serious certificate programs. Faculties on many campuses are inward-looking and spend their time discussing governance and the politics of the curriculum, rather than

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teaching and learning. Conventional forms and structures are nearly exhausted; faculty and administrators knock about in the organizational night, like cultural sleepwalkers.

The mandate to teach universal knowledge has been nearly lost in the rush to make universities profitable and to make curricula relevant and politically correct. This combination of profits and politics tends to create a nasty climate. One hundred years from now I fancy that the near extinction of America's universities and colleges will be a hot topic for historians. How was it that between 1995 and 2050, one thousand out of over three thousand American colleges and universities went out of business?

The number of books about the problems facing higher education has multiplied in recent years. Drawing out a central argument from a variety of authors is difficult. But, all together, the books under consideration here describe what happens to the scholastic enterprise when its core purpose is abdicated; when minds no longer connect; when students are allowed to remain self-absorbed; and when professors no longer profess, nor prove, nor admit ignorance. Professors and administrators who have no time for students and little patience for unfunded thought slowly but surely break the vital connection between minds.

The politicization of academic life in the United States began in earnest in the 1960s. Dissention over the morality of the Vietnam War, fueled in good measure by the civil rights and women's movements, turned many campuses into theaters of political action and opportunities for acting out. The clean-cut collegiate who dominated the public perception of college students in the 1950s was abruptly replaced by the long-haired, drug-using, left-wing protester. Authority and anarchy wrestled together in deadly combat, or at least in mock posturing. It is ironic that at the very time when these explosions were about to erupt, Clark Kerr published the first edition of *The Uses of the University*. Kerr, writing in the tradition of the Enlightenment, extolled the virtues of the "multiversity" and the possibility that the "expert" society would replace the politically driven societies of the past. In the expert society, useful knowledge would overcome ignorance, create rational social policies; universities, acting as meritocratic sorting and selecting machines, would stratify society according to the disinterested criteria of differential brainpower. The availability of large sums of money for academics willing to tailor their research to the interests of foundations and the federal government also began in the 1960s, a fact that Kerr rather too easily slides by. The cash nexus between funders and academics has done a great deal to turn the professor into the academic entrepreneur.

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Today, Kerr's view seems somewhat antiquated, even quaint. In the recent new edition of his book, he confirms his faith, slightly sadder but wiser, but nonetheless committed to a vision of the university as a well-oiled knowledge machine, "I have moved from guarded optimism to guarded pessimism, but I remain an unguarded Utopian, I believe that we can become 'a nation of educated people'." Kerr's optimism in the efficacy of education to produce a better society does seem somewhat utopian in the light of realities faced by higher education today.

In recent years, the demographic composition of students attending post-secondary institutions has changed dramatically. While professors are being pushed toward greater specialization, campuses are becoming multiracial and multicultural. The political and ethical issues raised by competing worldviews of "non-traditional" students has altered campus discourse, as the essays in Mortimer Sellers's anthology, *An Ethical Education,* make clear. To Sellers's mind, there is little connection between the ideals of the self-regulating academic guild and the contemporary university where faculty members tend to be more loyal to an international group of scholars than to their particular institution. This gets played out in the aims of the university, curricular content, campus speech, and affirmative action. At the heart of each of these issues is an ethical dilemma: What are the university's core values and in whose interest is it run?

Nowhere is this issue more heated than in the debate about what constitutes the "canon." In *Cultural Capital,* John Guillory argues that the debate over what constitutes an appropriate intellectual history is not about the selection of books but why the debate is taking place at all. Following the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, Guillory argues, "Only by understanding the social function and institutional protocols of the school will we understand how works are preserved, reproduced, and disseminated over successive generations and centuries." He asserts that the canon is determined by taste, which is really a polite word for distinctions of culture and consumption that function to demonstrate class dominance and to ensure that the dominant culture is judged to be virtuous, beautiful, and desirable. Guillory and Kerr inversely mirror each other. For the former, learning is by definition a political act; for the latter, learning is profoundly apolitical.

Guillory provides readers with a sharp understanding of how esoteric arguments about the canon often are about class and race. Much of the debate about reading lists does have a rather pretentious air about it. There is an implicit assumption that a reading list shapes perception and that demographic and ideological inclusiveness shapes students' consciousness. To the academic politician, such debates may be world-shaking, but while professors split intellectual hairs, America is in cultural

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free fall. The question is not which classics or almost-classics students should read, but whether or not they are reading at all or reading anything other than celebrity biographies, feel-good, quick-fix, soul-healing books, and picture books for adults.

PC Wars, the volume edited by Jeffrey Williams, gathers a number of provocative essays about the struggle over what is and what is not politically correct. To Williams's mind, "the PC scare is a savvy ideological power play that negates any opposition or critique from the outset, a highly successful public relations campaign that cushions and justifies the current corporate redistribution of wealth and the organization of life." While the question of who is and who is not closing the American mind is a great deal more complex than some critics of deconstruction and other reputed intellectual crimes are apt to admit, laying the PC scare at the doorsteps of corporate America rather than at conditions within the university is falsely simplistic. Corporations are dedicated to the politics of the marketplace; as long as people are buying, there is little angst in corporate suites over the ideological issues beloved by academics. If students want to read Foucault in designer clothes, corporate America does not tremble.

Many of the themes found in *PC Wars* are also found in Michael Bérubé's and Cary Nelson's edited volume, *Higher Education Under Siege.* They write, "The 1990s have not been kind to American institutions of higher education . . . We are convinced that many of the obstacles colleges and universities now face are systemic and will not disappear in our lifetimes." The essays in this collection approach the subject from a variety of perspectives, but one theme is shared by all of them: the university is in chaos. The tone of some of these essays suggests a kind of massive mid-life crisis of the over-educated and unfulfilled who see the world as one dysfunctional seminar.

This tone is echoed in David Damrosch's informed book, *We Scholars: Changing the Culture of the University.* He argues, "To an unprecedented degree, American intellectual life today is shaped by the values and habits of mind inculcated during years of specialized undergraduate and graduate training." The freewheeling intellectuals of days gone by have been replaced by "jargon-writing academic specialists." "Throughout this book," he concludes, "I have been arguing that scholars should be able to do better at working together and listening to one another." This is helpful and even laudable, but unlikely to happen.

As Diane Ravitch and Maris A. Vinovskis point out in their edited volume, *Learning from the Past,* American educational reform is stormy, and education's relation to the larger society is complex. Patricia Albjerg Graham likens American schools to battleships: they are large and difficult

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to maneuver, hard to turn around. There is a great deal to learn from history, but somehow the full magnitude of the social changes facing America today are not quite captured by looking backward. Events seem to be racing in new directions, and our history is a good but less than complete guide.

Clearly, there is no simple solution to the identity crisis facing education today. Somehow the ancient and honorable traditions of the academic guild have to merge with the needs of contemporary society so that a new kind of college and university can emerge, one which holds up the standard of truth, teaches universal knowledge, and does not go bankrupt. Perhaps a new model, "modern medievalism," could arise, whereby the traditions of scholarship and service are preserved, but in an organizational setting that is cost-effective and student-oriented. To effect such an organizational change, strong leadership is required - a resource that seems in short supply.

For decades Soviet power represented the latent external threat that gave purpose - or at least ideological structure - to American education. With the vaporization of the evil empire Americans are increasingly forced to examine the effects of the actual internal threat - cultural chaos, intellectual mediocrity, and a political system isolated from the pressing economic, cultural, and political problems of its own society.

To revitalize universities and schools, a deeper philosophical and ethical connection to the real sources of human suffering and aspiration must be made. The norm of "value-free" inquiry has led us down the blind moral alley of relativism and nihilism. Communitarianism purports to provide a solution to the moral havoc caused by relativism, but it has little substance. The communitarian university would lack the rigor to stand as a critical mirror to a society neurotically in love with itself. To my mind, the universities and the schools of the future will have to be profoundly countercultural, not in the 1960s sense but in the 1760s sense. Without the quest for enlightenment through reason, the very idea of the university degenerates into a cultural marketplace complete with hucksters, shoddy products, and unkept promises.

Peter W. Cookson, Jr.

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Bernhard's Last Novel

EXTINCTION. By Thomas Bernhard. Alfred A. Knopf. $24.00.

For all but two pages of the first part of Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard's last novel, *Extinction,* Franz Josef Murau, the forty-eight year-old narrator, either sits at his desk or stands at the window of his palatial apartment in Rome. He is poised in the midst of a magnificent view of the deserted Piazza Minerva, a telegram on his desk that has just informed him of his parents' and brothers' sudden death in a car accident near their ancestral castle Wolfsegg in Upper Austria, and three old photographs he has pulled out of a drawer, showing his brother, his parents, and his two sisters. In Bernhard's customary, monomaniacal mise-en-scène, Murau's sudden confrontation with death triggers torrents of overwrought reminiscences about growing up in the quasi-aristocratic milieu of Austria's landed gentry, savage ruminations about family relationships, Austrian culture and its perversion, and the intimate connection between national socialism and Catholicism, most of it recalled as Murau's words to Gambetti, his pupil of fifteen years.

It is not easy to reconstruct even the short actual timeline of the three hours the narrator sits at his desk, let alone the chronology of the events covered by his mind reeling back and forth through scenarios remembered, imagined, or dreamed: impressions of his family members; commentaries on politics, literature, and philosophy delivered for the most part in long outrageous riffs. Most of his consummate solo performances are for the benefit of Gambetti, to whom he is supposed to be teaching German literature. Murau is actually engaged in nurturing his own inborn and highly cultured propensity for anarchy, revolution, and a philosophically validated destruction of the world. It is up to the reader to pick up the clues, to separate the strands of incensed rhetoric to get beyond the corpses to the real motif.

Readers of Bernhard know him as the obsessive purveyor of unrelenting anguish, doom, and decay, delivered with a sarcasm that can be fully appreciated only by equally angst-, doom-, and decay-ridden fellow Austrians and some voyeuristic Germans. Yet *Extinction*'s story is about love, albeit veiled in layers of sublimation, some exquisitely decadent in the vintage Viennese tradition, some deeply moving, some outrageously obvious, and much of it quite adolescent, if not to say infantile.

Murau's relationship with his pupil suggests many resemblances to Ludwig Wittgenstein's intense involvements with his students throughout his life, fueled and tortured by Platonic ideals of perfection. For Murau,

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driven *ad absurdum* with characteristic Bernhardian furor and the satirist's merciless denouement of Austro-Teutonic claims to the Hellenistic heritage, liberation from all corrupting physical matter can be achieved only through total annihilation. He communicates all this to Gambetti, during their walks, over glasses of wine in their favorite cafés or in night-long sessions at the narrator's home, with a passion that inadvertently converts its pedagogical goals into hilarious arias of convoluted seduction.

Take his deliberations on the differing weights of German and Italian:

> German works hang like lead weights on the German language, I said to Gambetti, and constantly drag the mind down to a level that can only be harmful to it . . . Using my hands to simulate a balance, the left representing the German scale and the right the Italian, I quoted a sentence from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea*, first in German and then in Italian, and showed Gambetti how the German scale sank and the Italian sprang up. For his amusement, as well as my own, I recited a number of sentences from Schopenhauer, first in German and then in an extempore translation, weighing both versions in my hands and making what was first an object lesson into a kind of bizarre game, concluding with some sentences from Hegel and an aphorism from Kant.

Or the "roasting" of Goethe as the

> classifier of stones, the stargazer, the philosophical thumbsucker of the Germans, who ladled their spiritual jam into household canning jars, to be consumed at any time and for any purpose . . . The Germans take their Goethe like medicine, believing in its efficacy, its health-giving properties. Goethe is nothing other than Germany's foremost intellectual quack, I told Gambetti, her first intellectual homeopath.

But Bernhard is also quick to cover his tracks. The drama of an ailing Germanic middle-aged man making a fool of himself over an aging youth and his eventual death in Italy makes Thomas Mann the more obvious butt of the joke, just as Bernhard's saga of a family's decline can also be read as the balkanization of the Mann-created Germanic myth, *Buddenbrooks*.

If the first part of the book evokes the dramaturgy of Bernhard's many plays with one obsessive speaker talking to a silent listener, the novel's second part starts in a quieter pitch and rhythm. The morning after receiving the telegram, Murau travels back to Wolfsegg. Like Hamlet, he keeps himself hidden to watch the preparations for the family funeral, which follow a centuries-old ritual still driven in every detail by the an-

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cient feudalistic dynamics of the region's customs, economy and accordingly, its social hierarchy.

Unaccustomed yet to his new role and bereft of the family cast that were crucial to his role as outsider, the only remaining son sneaks about the castle like a little boy sniffing about in off-limits areas. He is caught by the cook while he sits in the kitchen, eyeing a pile of tabloid newspapers with headlines and gory photographs of the accident. Longing to read them, he is too embarrassed to admit to such unsophisticated, tasteless behavior. Later, he invites his new brother-in-law to the kitchen, ostensibly to fix him a sausage dinner, while tempting him with the newspapers. Watching him, a bit enviously, wolf down sausage and newspapers with equally uninhibited gusto validates all his anti-bourgeois prejudices against this wine-cork manufacturer, from the small German town of Freiburg. Aficionados of Berhardian mischief will pick up that this was also Heidegger's academic hometown, so to speak, as he was president of its world famous university during the Nazi era. They will also delight in all the possible innuendoes associable with Bernhard's belabored choice of profession for his hapless Chekhovian misfit in the given circumstances. The German language allows him to create one of his outrageous compound-nouns, *Weinstöpselfabrikant* ("wine-cork manufacturer") which in itself can be taken as a parody of Heidegger's convoluted etymological games, not to mention the philosopher's adoration for Nietzsche, whose preoccupation with Dionysos, god of wine and ecstasy, gets him into the bottle as well.

Infantile or grotesque images of sexuality abound throughout Bernhard's works. If they stand as a critique of a sexually repressed culture that is all the more possessed by it, they also make the writer himself an unmistakable member of that culture. Bernhard's infatuation with an elite he publicly ridicules, his self-absorbed confessional stance, and his social satire that includes himself as a target makes him the unlikely relative of Woody Allen. Both are equally at odds and in love with their representative tribes. Each cultivates the urban sophisticate hero-antihero trapped and misunderstood in a social environment he derides yet is perversely attached to in all its trappings.

While Allen occasionally ventured beyond comic boundaries of his New York neuroses into Northern European alienation, Bernhard gradually transposed his landed obsessions into the satiric pitch of Vienna's Jewish cabaret artists. Steeped in Austria's highly theatricalized Catholic ceremonials, the confessional mode is part of the national heritage that has theatricalized national and literary discourse. In the more worldly environs of Vienna's coffee houses the sublimated Catholic confessional reflexes mix with the equally sublimated rabbinical fervor of Jewish lite-

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rati. The result is a highly idiosyncratic literary – as well as conversational – style. Its pernicious humor may be puzzling, even off-putting to outsiders, but it proves a formidable barricade against the massive waves of silence, to this day Austrian society's most effective means of drowning out any unwanted "noise" about the past.

The funeral procession is a macabre carnival parade with the bishops following the coffins, followed by the surviving family members. They are followed by former Gauleiters and other "National Socialist grandees" whom after the war the parents had helped hide in the so-called children's villa. Bedecked with Nazi medals, they are followed by the "League of Comrades," Nazi veterans, some hobbling along on crutches. Completing the procession is Murau's old friend and "soul-mate" Eisenberg, a rabbi in Vienna to whom he makes a stunning offer: The entire estate and "everything belonging to it" shall be an "unconditional gift" to Vienna's Jewish community.

The ramifications of the ending, abrupt and laconic as it comes, are deeply disturbing. Murau, the last male descendant of the line and sole heir of the estate, exhibits all the symptoms of the master race. His offer to the rabbi is accepted, as chronicled by Murau in Rome, where he finally writes *Extinction* and dies in the course of the year as predicted by his doctor. If on the one hand Murau's act of abdication, is *Wiedergutmachung*, a penance for the sins of his fathers, it is also morally somewhat questionable as an act of personal revenge. If the Jewish community accepts this gift with "everything that goes with it," as Berhard puts it with characteristic insidiousness, is Murau also bequeathing its lethal legacy of historic guilt, ambitions, repression, and self-delusions? Does this once again cynically affirm the cycle of the victims as heirs of the criminals? Finally, a strong biblical scenario emerges from the subverted images of Catholic tradition in the novel. Within the patriarchal structure of the culture, the family line is extinct. What's left is a barren post-Holocaust landscape of guilt and retribution. Does it suggest the desert, once again, through which the modern tribes of Israel have to pass yet another time, to prepare the way to the Holy Land for the rest of the world? Or is it Bernhard's equivocal answer to a Jewish joke?

Gitta Honegger

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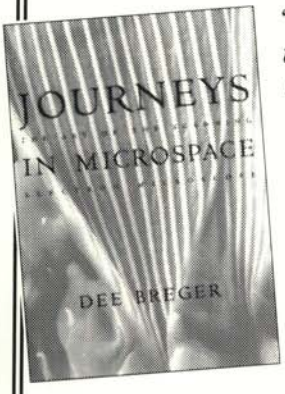

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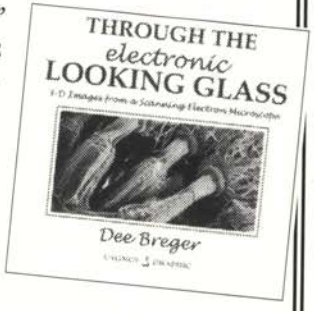

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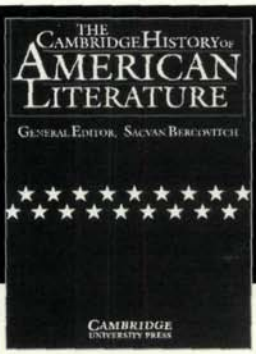

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